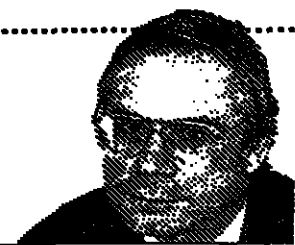


2 NEWS

Sketch

Fighting talk and warring factions



Simon Hoggart

THE House of Commons on the march to war is an awesome sight. Seeing the line drawn up, buttons gleaming, bayonets fixed, one feels as the full must have done at Rorke's Drift.

Speeches and men — Cook, Howard, Major, Kaufman, Campbell — tramp towards the gunfire, beating to the unconscious rhythm of marching feet. I can't quite see Robin Cook as a colonel: yesterday, as he addressed the troops on the eve of battle, one felt as if the St Crispin's Day speech had been delivered by Henry V's RSM, a tough wee Scottish scrapper who knows the men have more respect for him than any effete young subaltern.

Mr Cook knows that the most effective speeches rely on verbal tics and nuances. So his voice squeaks at times, sometimes it is buried in his beard. Then it scurries like a bolting rabbit, before settling back to its stately martial pace: "Wimm, Chil. And. Elderly. Men. Who were not under arms." Then:

"The next time...
"We are confronted.
"By a dictator.
"Threatening his region.
"And.
"The lives of his people."

It is curious to watch such thunderous precepts issue from so small a frame. I sometimes think Mr Cook needs an instant Anthony Eden kit: a Homburg hat and elevator shoes.

Some of his speech used the formulae of diplomacy, but spiced with the language of the streets. Unscorn should not be "gurted". Saddam should not be permitted "to punch black holes where Unscorn's wit should run".

Soldiers need to be motivated to march into peril, and Mr Cook did it by making our flesh crawl. (Metaphorically: it is, presumably, Saddam who may one day do it later.)

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Everyone. It says, wears a

ally. Though, Mr Cook said, "our assessment is that the threat of retaliation is low". Oh, good.)

"The victims of VX agent die by suffocation as their nervous system ignores the signals to breathe... botulinum toxin, which kills by progressive paralysis, and the bacterium clostridium, which causes the most painful death of all three."

"...and it is this death I have selected for you, Mr Bond," the Foreign Secretary might have added, but didn't.

Interventions were flicked away, if courteously, difficult questions, such as why Benn's on the Security Council, simply ignored.

Mr Cook's peroration was about the anarchic horror of a world in which UN resolutions can be flouted at will. His final sentence returned to the same thumping, drumming rhythm:

"We ask the House.
"To show the same resolve.
"By backing us tonight."
Gwyneth Paltrow: Who is she? Even Michael Howard had the grace, for once, not to mention her name.

It was left to John Major to calm the mood with a thoughtful speech, full of creeping, giggling anxieties. He talked about "collateral damage" — a fashionable phrase by which we mean killing civilians.

Would Saddam revenge himself on us? "The Foreign Secretary assessed the risk as low. I pray that he is right."

The last prime minister to lead the country in war told us: "This is no time for jingoism. Only a fool goes into battle smiling."

Mr Benn made an emotional speech which reduced him, at least, to the brink of tears.

"Every MP who votes for the motion tonight will be consciously and deliberately accepting the responsibility for the deaths of innocent people," he said.

He spoke about watching London during the Blitz. "Do not Iraqi women weep when their children die?" Of course they do, and of course nobody wishes for those deaths. But Mr Benn did not answer the most crucial question of all: how do you cope with the fact that Saddam Hussein is more indifferent to the fate of Iraqi children than any British or American politician?

Straw tells secret society to name members working in criminal justice system or face legal moves

Freemasons get ultimatum

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

THE Freemasons are to be challenged by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to hand over the names of members who are judges, magistrates or police officers or face legal moves to make registration compulsory.

All new recruits to the police, probation and prison services as well as magistrates, judges and crown prosecutors will be required, as a condition of their contract, to declare whether or not they are Freemasons.

The formal definition of new recruit has yet to be finalised, but could include those who are promoted or move between police forces.

The decision by the Home Secretary gives the masons one last chance to declare voluntarily which of their members are judges and police officers before legislation enforcing compulsory registration comes in.

It follows a year-long struggle between the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, who acknowledged the concerns of senior judges who insisted registration was offensive. The judges even objected to

questions about if they minded being asked if they were masons.

One senior judge, Lord Justice Millett, continued the attack yesterday by insisting that registration was silly.

"There is no sense in it. It is an unwarranted interference in our private lives and it doesn't achieve anything. What are people supposed to do? You can't choose which judge will try your case, so what's the point?"

But Mr Straw said yesterday it was vital that those working in the criminal justice system not only acted fairly but were seen to be acting fairly.

"The Freemasons have said they are not a secret society but a society with secrets. I think it is widely accepted that one secret they should not be keeping is who their members are in the criminal justice system."

He told MPs that many police officers had testified that freemasonry had been a serious problem. "Officers who served in the Metropolitan Police 20 to 30 years ago will tell you that the principal way of gaining promotion was by being a Freemason."

Mr Straw said he had been scandalised by a case in his own constituency in which

eight police officers attempted to frame a father and his son who had blundered into their masonic evening.

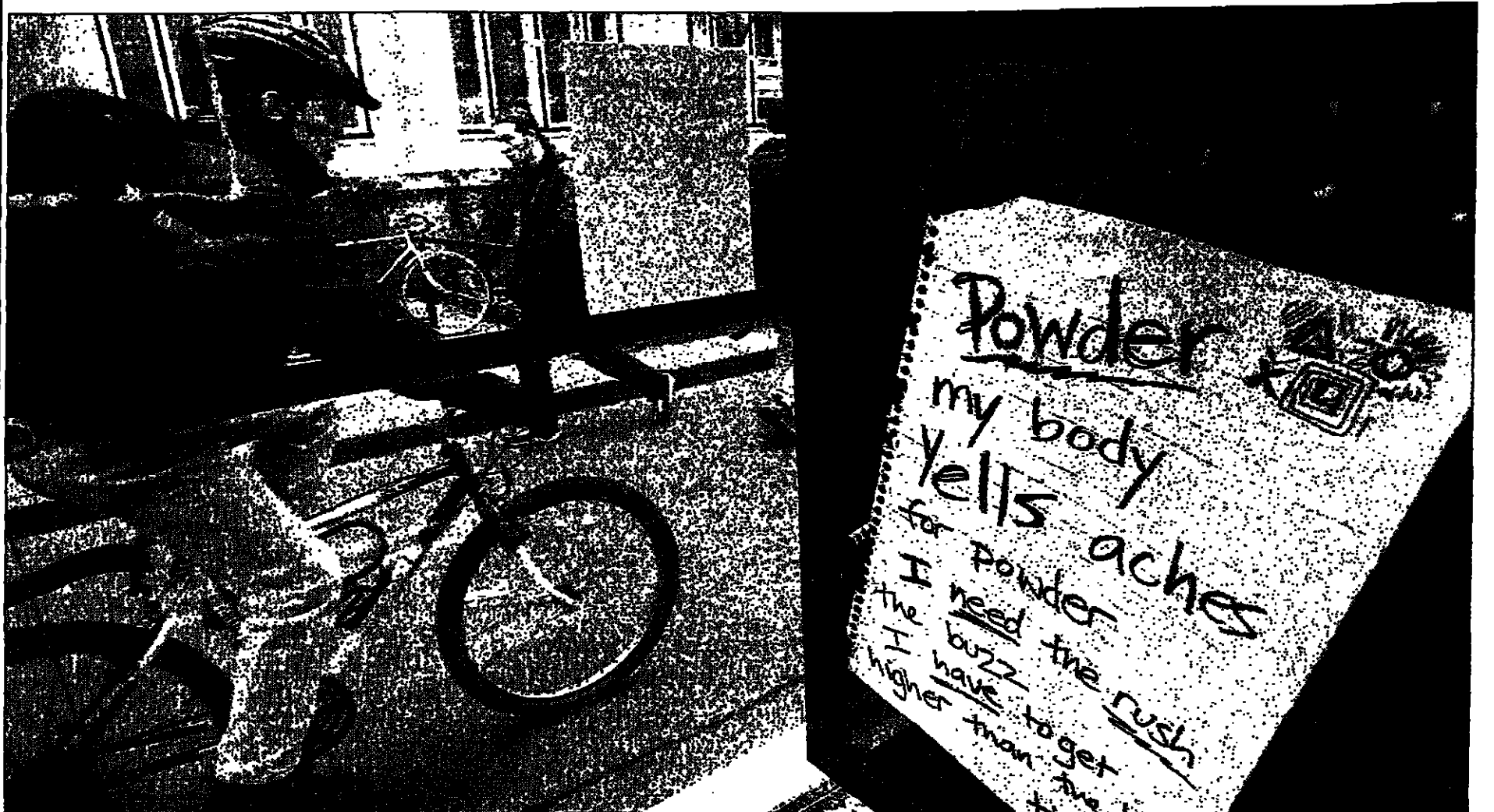
The United Grand Lodge refused to comment yesterday, saying it would make its position clear when its Grand Secretary, Commander Michael Higham, appears before the Commons home affairs select committee tomorrow to give evidence about the involvement of masons in the now disbanded West Midlands Serious Crime Squad.

Mr Straw is to write to the United Grand Lodge in the next fortnight asking it to provide regional lists for England and Wales of Freemasons working in the criminal justice system.

If it is unable or unwilling to publish the names the Government will open its own register and request all the 250,000 people concerned to state whether or not they are masons or to be recorded as a "null return".

Chris Mullin, chairman of the home affairs committee, who has been urging the registration of masons, said yesterday: "This is a big step forward. We are up against some mighty vested interests here. We have to prepare for the possibility that legislation might be required."

Leader comment, page 8



A PlayStation poster, part of the Sony advertising campaign that has been withdrawn after protests over its apparent references to drugs

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCPHEE

Computer game 'drug' ads scrapped

Sony claims references to buzz, rush, powder and getting higher relate merely to snowboarding

David Ward

SONY yesterday pulled the plug on a multi-million pound advertising campaign after parents complained that it used explicit drug language to sell a computer game to children and teenagers.

The advertisements, for a snowboarding game for Britain's biggest-selling games console, PlayStation, referred to a body "aching for powder" and "needing the rush".

After 10 public complaints, an inquiry by the Advertising Standards Authority and condemnation by drugs help agencies, the electronics giant has decided to withdraw from sites all over the country posters advertising Coolboarders 2, which sells for £24.99. A magazine and TV campaign has also been abandoned.

"There is something rather unpleasant about a large corporation exploiting the drug scene in an effort to make

ever greater profits," said Greg Porter, deputy director of the drugs charity Release.

In a statement yesterday, Sony did not admit that the ads contained drug imagery.

"Although the advertising was designed to be purely a reference to the excitement of snowboarding, we now understand that some people perceive it contains a reference to drugs," a spokesman said.

The posters show a page torn from a spiral notebook with blots and doodles and an untidy, handwritten message that appears to play with the ambiguity of "powder". "My body yells, aches for powder," says the text. "I need the rush, the buzz. I have to get higher than the last time."

The ambiguities are continued in a fuller version of the advertisement that appears in the Face. "When I'm on [powder] I get a real buzz, the blood coursing through my veins. I get really high. I'm floating, gliding through the air away from reality and

then I begin to come down with a bump and I need to do it again straight away."

"I need to get higher than the last time UP UP UP WITH THE CLOUDS THE SKY I'm coming down with a bang. I crash out... no PAIN!"

The Sony spokesman said: "The advertising is written in snowboarding parlance, and is meant to reflect the adrenaline rush of the sport. This is the language that snowboarders use."

But Alan Houghton, manager of the Lifeline drugs advice charity in Manchester, said: "This is symptomatic of just how much drug culture has infiltrated young people's lives. This is not even a very subtle approach by Sony, who have sucked out that drugs and drug imagery are so important to young people that they can blatantly get away with something that is not at all subtle. Young people will recognise all the signifiers from it."

He said the scrawled note resembled those which parents find in their children's pockets and ring the bell for help in deciphering.

"Whether we like it or not, drugs imagery and references to drugs are absolutely every-

where. You have only got to see the way people are advertising ice cream and soft drinks now to realise that they are aiming for a market that knows about psychedelic and stimulant drugs. They are using all that imagery to put their point over."

The Advertising Standards Authority began to receive complaints about the poster at the end of last week. "We

have contacted Sony and the advertising agency and asked for their swift response," said a spokesman. "References to drugs or allusions to drugs are generally unacceptable in advertisements. We have certainly had complaints on this poster and the complaints are all to do with the use of drug terminology."

A spokeswoman for the Health Education Authority, which runs a national drugs and solvent education campaign and maintains the national drugs helpline, said: "Anything that appears to encourage young people to take drugs is irresponsible."

A spokesman for TBWA Simons Palmer, the advertising agency which devised the campaign, refused to comment and referred all inquiries to Sony.

Review

They do make 'em like that any more

Derek Malcolm

The Same Old Song
Berlin Film Festival

MIRACLES sometimes happen for veteran film directors. But no one expected Alain Resnais, maker of classics such as Hiroshima, Mon Amour and Last Year in Marienbad nearly 40 years ago, to have his most successful film at the box office at the age of 75.

The Same Old Song has sold more than 4 million tickets in France. It is also nominated for 12 Césars, the French equivalent of Oscars, and was presented yesterday in competition at the Berlin Festival, where it became an immediate favourite for top prize.

The film is dedicated to Dennis Potter and uses popular song in the same way as he did. As a professed Anglophile, Resnais has already filmed work by the late British playwrights: David Mercer (Providence) and Alan Ayckbourn (Smoking and No Smoking).

Superficially, this musical non-musical does not seem to have much of Potter's acerbity and scathing wit. But this tale of six characters in search of happiness and their true selves looks at first more like a joyously French romantic comedy than a coruscating Potter tour de force.

It is stylishly written, beautifully acted, and directed with the kind of ardour and imagination one generally associates with much more youthful directors. Underneath its plotlines, however, there is a persistent vein of pessimism.

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mask and the deceptions we cherish frequently prevent either happiness or fulfillment. For Resnais, it is the modern disease of refusing contact with reality.

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Been there? Done it? Try space odyssey 2001

Martin Kettle in Washington

WITH impeccable show business timing, an American travel company is offering the public a chance to make their own personal space odyssey in the year 2001 — and with a guaranteed window seat so they can bring back the holiday video to end all holiday videos.

For \$98,000 (\$59,000) a head, the Zegrahm Space Voyages company of Seattle offers six days' training followed by a three-hour round trip to outer space in a private spacecraft, with the first blast-off scheduled for December 1, 2001.

Zegrahm plans two flights a week, with six passengers accompanying a pilot and co-pilot. Prospective passengers are asked to put \$5,000 up front to guarantee their bookings.

The company's "Adventure Travel to Space" brochure assures passengers that they will have window seats to let them see the Earth from space, and confirms that the spacecraft will have a toilet. It shows drawings of the personally programmed souvenir spacesuits which the passengers will be able to take home afterwards.

"If a journey to space has been one of your life's dreams, this is the trip for you," enthuses one travel agency which has begun offering the Zegrahm flight.

For the trip, a mother ship called the Sky Lifter would take off from a standard airport runway. The Space Cruiser spacecraft, not unlike an executive jet plane in appearance, would be attached to the Sky Lifter. At 50,000ft, the mother ship would pull away, leaving the Space Cruiser to

climb under its own jet and rocket power to "astronaut altitude", 62 miles high. The passengers would become briefly weightless before the Space Cruiser returns to the stratosphere, restarts its jets and flies to the landing strip.

Although all space tourism plans require prior authorisation from the United States Federal Aviation Administration, there seems little doubt that private companies will eventually be given the go-ahead to take the public to realms where only government programmes have been able to penetrate.

There are other incentives too. A St Louis-based group, the X Prize Foundation, is offering a \$10 million (\$6 million) reward to the first private team to boldly go beyond the final frontier twice in two weeks, with paying passengers.

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Sacked workers down on the farm



A demonstrator puts his best foot forward on the chicken farm site at Croxton near St Neots yesterday

PHOTOGRAPHS: GRAHAM TURNER and (below) FINANCIAL TIMES

Pickets' game of chicken throws everything but the kitchen sink at the man from Magnet

Seumas Milne
Labour Editor

LAST year British Airways cabin staff discovered the power of the "mass sickle" when they took industrial action. Yesterday Magnet Kitchen workers fired 18 months ago for going on strike unveiled a new industrial weapon in their battle for reinstatement: the chicken farm.

It was set up by the sacked workers from Darlington and a group of redundant Derbyshire miners on two acres of land near the £1.5 Cambridge-shire mansion of Alan Bowkett, chief executive of Magnet's parent company Belford, to evade threats of legal action for secondary picketing. Lawyers had advised them it was the only way of getting round the legislation.

Under placards warning "the chickens are coming home to roost", and video surveillance by Mr Bowkett's security guards, the farm was officially opened with three hens on a site rented by the GMB union in the village of Croxton near St Neots.

Mr Bowkett — who last year got a £124,000 pay rise — was described as a "fat cat of the highest order" by GMB national secretary Phil Davies. The chicken farm has been named "Camp Bowkett".



Alan Bowkett... has 590-acre estate close to protest site

The opening was marred when one of the chickens escaped and was run over on the A428. The two survivors were entrusted to a neighbouring farmer until more secure coops are delivered and the sacked workers have arranged an official farming permit.

A spokesman for Belford said the chicken farm was a "childish stunt" and "low-grade publicity seeking" which demonstrated that the GMB had "no serious interest in tackling the issues or engaging in a sensible debate". Mr Bowkett was considering his legal options.

Last month an initial protest staged by the sacked workers and Derbyshire miners outside Croxton Park, Mr Bowkett's estate, triggered the first company/union talks since 350 Magnet workers, with an average 24 years' service at the Darlington furniture factory, were sacked in September 1996. The workers had been seeking a 3 per cent across-the-board pay increase after a three-year freeze for many employees.

The talks broke down after the company refused to reinstate any of the workers, while offering to pay £300,000 towards retraining. Since then on four out of five occasions the GMB and the three other unions involved in the dispute have attempted to rent land in Croxton they have been gannupped by a mysterious rival.

On Monday Mr Bowkett's lawyers wrote to John Edmonds, GMB general secretary, threatening unspecified legal action if yesterday's chicken farm launch went ahead. That followed earlier warnings that the sacked workers and their supporters were "harassing" Mr Bowkett and his family and engaging in illegal secondary picketing.

Yesterday the former Magnet workers began distributing tens of thousands of leaflets about their dispute in Croxton and St Neots, and the GMB pledged to step up its campaign until the company

returned to the negotiating table.

Separately, under legal rights going back to the Middle Ages, the union says it is also entitled to hold "pageants" in the village. It plans the first this Saturday, complete with a karaoke session featuring 40 years of chart songs with chicken references.

Terry Buckeraitis, a former president of the Derbyshire NUM who joined yesterday's chicken farm launch, said the Magnet workers had supported Derbyshire miners during the 1984/85 pit strike and the former pitmen were now "repaying a debt of honour".

Chicken and egg

August 1996: Magnet workers go on official strike over pay after three-year wage freeze.

September: Company sacks 350 strikers with 24 years' average service.

January 1998: Derbyshire miners set up camp outside Magnet executive's home. First talks with four unions on settling dispute begin.

February: Negotiations break down. Magnet chicken farm established.

Weekly air crash fear

Crowded skies will bring more accidents, controllers warned

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

ONE MAJOR plane crash a week is predicted because of the expected doubling of air traffic over the next 12 years, a world conference of air traffic controllers in Maastricht will be warned today.

In a speech reflecting growing industry calls for extra safety precautions, Stuart Matthews, president of the Flight Safety Federation, warns that rising traffic will prompt a "significant increase in accidents".

The skies are increasingly crowded, particularly in areas like Britain, where the West Drayton control centre, for instance, looks after 5,000 air movements every 24 hours.

Over the years the international accident rate has fallen to 1.5 accidents per million departures, "but is no longer

continuing to decline", Mr Matthews points out.

He says that 50 per cent of all accidents occur during approach and landing, such as Monday's Taiwanese air crash. More than 200 people were killed when the pilot of an Airbus 300 crashed in thick fog at Taipei International airport, after apparently misjudging the plane's height.

During the past 10 years, 70 per cent of all accidents have involved carriers which between them accounted for only 16 per cent of total air traffic. Airlines from Latin America, Africa, China and South-east Asia, have "horrendous accident rates", despite carrying considerably less traffic.

Mr Matthews takes management to task for failing to spot and rectify potential failures. Regulatory bodies like the Civil Aviation Authority must understand they can

also cause potential failures, he says. "They have a responsibility to ensure they are capable of performing their responsibilities to international standards, as well as providing adequate airport and navigation facilities."

Sir Malcolm Field, chairman of the CAA, said yesterday that the international character of aviation regulation was set to change, with less emphasis on national sovereignty and more on cross-border, even global, collaboration.

Safety regulation would have to change because aircraft manufacturers, airlines and airport operators were becoming increasingly multinational. The next step would be a single European aviation safety authority, with full legal powers.

The Government is still considering whether to privatise Britain's air traffic control services. Sir Malcolm said the CAA preferred a regulated utility, but would support the services being allowed to approach the financial market for funds.

Sinn Fein plea to judge over suspension from talks

continued from page 1

Sinn Fein's exclusion depends on the Government's assertions that it is "inextricably linked" to the IRA. Michael McLaughlin, Sinn Fein chairman, last night described the British government's indictment to remove it from the talks as vague.

The Government remains committed to Sinn Fein's suspension, probably for as little as three weeks. Such a timespan would lessen pressure on the IRA ceasefire.

Bertie Ahern, the Irish prime minister, said in the Dail that Gardai had met with the RUC and were satisfied there was evidence the IRA was behind the murders of drugs dealer Brendan Campbell, aged 30, and loyalist Bobby Dougan, aged 38. He said: "There is a case to answer."

Three men charged over the murder of Mr Dougan were yesterday from Maghera to the Maze.

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Confidentiality becomes secrecy in the eyes of those who cannot get answers. Their baby is dead or permanently damaged, somebody may be to blame and nobody will tell them exactly what went on. Sarah Boseley on the case of the Bristol heart surgeons

G2 cover story

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Technology

4 BRITAIN

The Guardian Wednesday February 18 1998

Antique dealer's £2.8m scheme thwarted by RSPCA □ Legal executive denies role in conspiracy to sell 'aphrodisiac' to Middle East

Prisoner plotted to sell rhino horn

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

AN ANTIQUE dealer serving life for murdering his wife organised a conspiracy from his prison cell to sell £2.8 million worth of rhinoceros horn and launder the cash through a solicitors' firm, King's Lynn, Norfolk, crown court was told yesterday.

Wilfred Bull, aged 63, had collected 128 horns before he was jailed in 1988. He asked friends to organise the sale of the horn to the Middle East at £12,000 a kilo to prepare for his release.

But a broker who was asked to help tipped off the RSPCA, who with the police mounted an undercover operation to trap the gang, said John Farmer, prosecuting. At the

time Mr Bull collected the horn, the trade in rhinoceros horn, mainly as an aphrodisiac, was not illegal but became so while he was in prison. Mr Farmer said the international community had banned the trade to protect the endangered species.

But Bull had contacted a woman friend, Carol Scotchford-Hughes, 50, who brought in another couple — David Eley, 54, and his friend Elaine Arscott, 40.

Arscott, using a false name, rang the London Stock Exchange and spoke to a broker to see if he could assist. Mr Farmer said the broker reported it to the RSPCA. Meetings were arranged with Arscott and Eley at the Holiday Inn, Cambridge, with RSPCA officers posing as buyers.

Bull had enlisted a legal executive, Paul Rextrew, 45,



Paul Rextrew (left), who denies plot to sell rhino horn, and Carol Scotchford-Hughes, David Eley and Elaine Arscott, who admit it



who worked for Attridge, a London firm of solicitors.

Rextrew had met Bull in prison while visiting a client.

Mr Farmer told the court Rextrew's role was to ensure

the purchasers did not get the horn before Bull got his money and in part, to launder the money.

The case came to a head on September 3, 1996, when the

transaction was due to be completed at the home of Bull's friend, who had the horns. "Undercover police officers arrived at her flat with a view to the transaction go-

ing through," Mr Farmer said.

During the subsequent investigation it became clear that Rextrew was involved.

Rextrew had referred in let-

ters to the rhino horns as art treasures or animal trophies.

He was pleading not guilty, saying he did not know he was dealing with rhino horns.

"But he had known Bull for a

long time and knows he is serving life for murder. It is inconceivable that if he is in negotiations with a man over property worth more than £2 million that he is not going to ask what it is."

Mr Farmer said that before his murder conviction Bull had been an antique dealer with a particular interest in rhino horns.

Rextrew, who denies the charge of conspiring to sell rhino horn between January 1 and September 4, 1996, has said he did not know the deal involved the restricted specimen.

The jury has been told that Bull, who is still in prison, Scotchford-Hughes, Arscott and Eley have all pleaded guilty to the charge under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement Regulations) Act 1988.

The case continues today.

Tim Radford reports from the American Association for the Advancement of Science

Cancer peril in using sunscreens

SUNSCREENS may not protect against one potentially lethal kind of skin cancer, two teams of researchers said yesterday. And a British scientist said that some sunscreen components may actually increase the risk.

Melanoma rates in the US and Europe have risen 20-fold since 1985. The tumours take decades to develop. Experiments are performed on animals, or fish or skin cells in the laboratory, rather than humans, so studies have often contradicted each other.

So one group from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering cancer centre in New York did their own survey and took another look at earlier, large-scale studies. "We have found no relationship between sunscreen use at any age and the development of melanoma skin cancer," Marianne Berwick told the association in Philadelphia.

"We can conclude that it is not safe to rely on sunscreens to prevent skin cancer."

Sunlight at certain wavelengths could damage skin DNA and set up the train of events that ended in cancer.

Sunscreens usually protected against sunburn and the other skin cancers such as the carcinomas. But people with fair hair and fair skin and frequent moles were up to six times more at risk from

skin cancer and were therefore most likely to use sunscreen. So they might spend longer in the sun than they should, and increase their risk.

Another team was led by Richard Setlow, of the US government's Brookhaven national laboratory, who said that sunscreens traditionally only blocked the wavelengths of ultraviolet known as UVB, which caused sunburn and the carcinomas.

"But we have found that another range of wavelengths, collectively called UVA, may be much more powerful in causing skin cancers called melanoma."

John Knowland, of Oxford University, said that at least one component of sunscreens, PABA, actually seemed to break down into products that damaged DNA, and led to lesions or tumours called melanoma.

This was replaced 30 years ago by a derivative, known as Padimate-O, but also by a formulaic name. European manufacturers were not obliged to declare its presence on the label, and if they did, they might use an alternative name.

"I will not use sunscreens that contain PABA or its derivatives. If you want to avoid PABA and its derivatives then go for sunscreens that specifically say PABA-free," Dr Knowland said.



Olden but less golden times... sunscreen may be less effective protection against one potentially lethal kind of skin cancer than yesteryear's bathing dress.

PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BOWEN

Element of doubt seeps into 'foolproof' DNA tests

FORENSIC scientists are discovering serious problems with some DNA fingerprinting evidence.

Samples, supposed to be unique markers of identity, are easily contaminated. Juries are swayed by the way the expert evidence is explained. And one particular form of DNA — that retrieved from hair — can be different from that taken from blood or semen from the same individual.

At least one murder case, now on appeal in Tennessee, depends entirely on DNA evidence that scientists now say was misleading.

The problem occurs only in DNA taken from the cell's powerhouse, an organ called the mitochondrion. All the DNA in chromosomes is inherited from both parents, but mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is inherited only from the mother.

Because of this connection, mtDNA given by the Duke of Edinburgh and others was compared last year to DNA recovered from bodies exhumed in Russia. The match was enough to convince most people that they had found the remains of the Tsar and his family, murdered during the Russian revolution.

But mtDNA has turned out to be unpredictable. William Shields of New York state university told the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Philadelphia yesterday. Forensic scientists could recover tiny amounts from a human hair, but to "read" the sample they had to multiply it trillions of times and could accidentally include bits of DNA from other sources.

"DNA flies," he said. "It comes from sneezes and fingers and it shows up in the reagents that they then use in the tests. When they have traced it back, it turns out it

comes from the laboratory technicians, and the FBI sometimes."

The other catch was that tiny mutations in mtDNA could multiply confusingly. The reading from saliva might be slightly different from one from bone.

DNA from the cell nucleus, provided it is not contaminated, provides a stronger guide.

However, scientific evidence deals not in absolutes but in probabilities. Jonathan Koehler, of the University of Texas, who was a consultant for the defence in the OJ Simpson trial,

tested a group of mock jurors with two ways of presenting the same forensic evidence. Some were told the probability of a blood sample match being a coincidence was 0.1 per cent. Others were told the probability of a match was one in 1,000.

About 82 per cent of the first group thought the suspect was likely to be the source of the sample. Only 48 per cent of the second group thought the suspect could be the source.

William Thompson, of the University of California Irvine, said expert witnesses could prejudice outcomes.

Even the most carefully made DNA samples sometimes did not match. The forensic scientist had to decide whether the difference was true or just a "blip" and, if uncertain, retest.

The Forensic Science Service in London said: "mtDNA profiling — taken from hair, bones or faeces — is only used in cases where it has not been possible to obtain suitable samples for cell nucleus DNA profiling, which typically uses saliva, blood or semen."

"There is no evidence to support the view that two parts of the same hair could produce different results."

Release offer too late for sick dog

Clare Longrigg

A TERMINALLY ill dog may die in custody even though a court yesterday accepted evidence that it is not a danger to the public.

Judd, an eight-year-old mastiff-terrier cross, has been in kennels for six years. It was seized by police under the Dangerous Dogs Act in November 1991 while walking with its owner on Hampstead Heath unmuzzled.

The dog now has a tumour on its spine, and has been given only two to four weeks to live. Its owner, Gary Dunne, from Stoke Newington, north London, wants his pet to die in comfort at home.

But yesterday at Marylebone magistrates' court, Christopher Pratt ruled that Judd could not be released without being registered.

This involves being tattooed, fitted with a microchip, and castrated — an operation that the dog is unlikely to survive.

A number of pit-bull type dogs have been released since the Dangerous Dogs Act was amended last year to give magistrates discretion to judge each dog on its record of violence. But Judd has become entangled in red tape. Mr Dunne was convicted in

1991 under the Dangerous Dogs Act, and the dog ordered to be destroyed. The conviction was overturned on appeal in June 1992, but the dog could not go home because it was not registered. It could not be registered because the index was closed.

The deadline for all dogs "of the type known as Pit Bull" to be registered was November 30, 1991. Mr Dunne had made an appointment to have Judd registered on November 28, but the mongrel was arrested before he could get to the vet.

Mr Dunne was allowed to see his dog again last week. "The person who runs the kennel told me he was in reasonably good health, but he looked skinny to me. I think he recognised me. I hope so. He's dying. I don't want him home in a bag. I want to get him home breathing."

Trevor Cooper, acting for Mr Dunne, said it was an "absolutely tragic case". He said Mr Dunne was a responsible owner who had tried every legal avenue to secure his dog's release. "He has never given up on his pet, but perhaps, sadly, his pet has given up on him."

After the hearing, a police spokesman said the act had become an "administrative nightmare".

Man electrified door to kill wife

A MAN was convicted yesterday of attempting to murder his estranged wife by wiring up the metal handle of her garage door to a plug socket so she would electrocute herself.

A jury at Liverpool crown court found Robert Miller, aged 40, guilty of the attempted murder of Susan Miller, 44, at her home in Southport, Merseyside, last October. Sentencing was adjourned for reports.

Mrs Miller, who gave evidence at the start of the four-day trial, was not in court. The court had heard that the couple had been granted a divorce on the day of the murder attempt. Previously there had been arguments over custody of their two young daughters, aged seven and five.

Mrs Miller and her husband, a former leading aircraft engineer with the Royal Navy who served in the Falklands, and who after the separation lived in Southport.

He waited for her in the pitch dark garage next to her detached home, wearing a surgical glove, but in the event she pushed open the wooden door, which had been left ajar, without touching the metal handle, the court heard. A struggle ensued with Miller chasing his wife from

the garage and across the garden to the patio door, where he grabbed her around the neck, causing her to fall.

The defence said Miller was waiting in the garage, where his wife would often smoke a cigarette, to try to resolve the question of access to their daughters, Alex, eight, and Hannah, seven.

Mrs Miller, it emerged, had telephoned the police on four previous occasions to complain about her husband's conduct, once accusing him of kidnapping their daughters.

Mr Miller, the jury was told, lied to the police following his arrest, claiming he had never "touched wires" despite work reports saying he had an elementary knowledge of electrical matters.

His Honour Judge Maddison warned Miller that "unless quite startling circumstances were revealed" in reports, he faced a substantial prison term.

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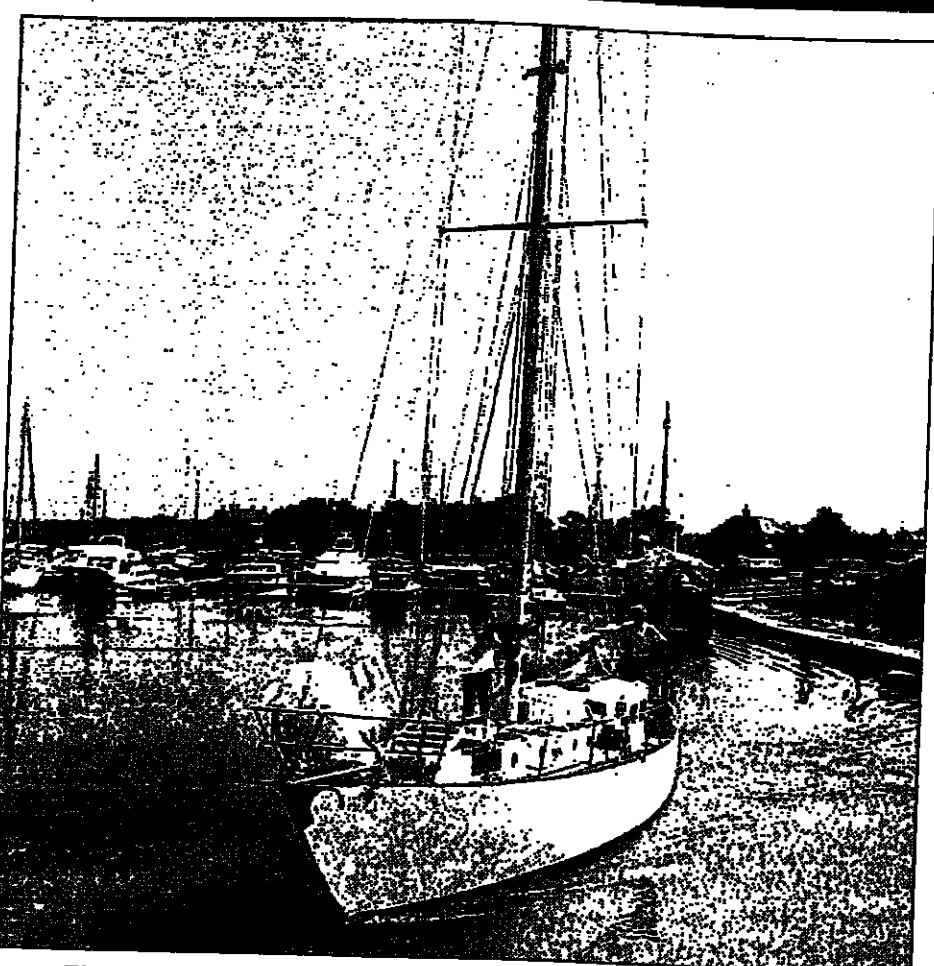
21/11/1998

Capsize in the Southern Ocean



'We climbed on one side of the yacht and leapt. We both went under. I grabbed some kelp and pulled myself up on to the rocks and my wife hung on to my foot'

Peter and Doreen Cheek (left) were rescued from storms off the coast of Tasmania in which their boat (right) was destroyed



Yacht couple rescued after ordeal on freezing rock

Luke Harding

A BRITISH couple who spent seven hours clinging to a rocky outcrop after their yacht capsized in the Southern Ocean yesterday described how their ordeal left them feeling "pretty numb" and "very sad".

Peter and Doreen Cheek said they endured the worst night of their lives clinging to each other in a freezing gale awaiting rescue. They covered themselves in grass to keep warm before being

winched to safety by an Australian rescue helicopter.

Their yacht, *Talis II*, was destroyed after it was driven on to rocks near Maatsuyker Island, 18 miles south of Tasmania — a remote area prone to wild Antarctic gales.

The couple, from Whiphams on the Isle of Wight, put out two mayday signals as the vessel started taking on water and threw all their possessions into a dinghy — only to see it swept away.

Mr Cheek, aged 62, said: "That was when we realised we had to take whatever chance we could. We clamb-

bered to one side of the yacht and leapt down on to this tiny rocky outcrop. We were soaking wet."

The couple who are both experienced sailors were half way through a five year round-the-world voyage.

They had decided to anchor off the main island and go ashore to film its population of sea lions and seals.

When they returned to their boat the wind suddenly veered and started to blow onshore.

Mr Cheek said: "I decided that the best thing to do would be to clear out of it —

to drop the anchor and go. Before we knew where we were, because it was so dark and we didn't realise we were being dragged back, we were against the rocks."

Expecting the boat to cave in, the couple jumped into the freezing water. "We both went under and came up," he said. "I grabbed hold of some of the kelp and pulled myself up on to the rocks and my

wife hung on to my foot. I managed to pull her up as well and we got out."

The couple's mayday was picked up by another yacht sheltering nearby. They were eventually spotted at first light yesterday, waving their lifejackets, and taken to hospital in Hobart.

The Cheeks were treated for mild hypothermia and later discharged.

Mr Cheek, aged 58, said: "It was very sad. It was the worst night of my life. We lost everything — video cameras, photographs — everything."

Her husband added: "It has not really sunk in yet. I am pretty numb."

The yacht was not insured. Australian search and rescue spokesman David Gray yesterday said he was "quite staggered" that the

couple had survived the ordeal. "In the circumstances they are extremely lucky to be alive," he said.

"After they maydayed us they tried to move to shelter but their propeller became fouled by kelp. They immediately lost power."

Mr Cheek, a former lorry driver, built the boat from just a hull 22 years ago. After a successful trip round the

West Indies in 1988, he and his wife decided to throw in their jobs and sail round the world.

They had already travelled across the Atlantic and through the Panama Canal, and had visited Venezuela, Fiji, and the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific.

Mr Cheek added: "We have nothing but the clothes we are standing up in."

NHS sued for 'trauma' of murder by patient

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

A HEALTH authority and an NHS trust asked the High Court yesterday to dismiss a claim for damages by the mother of a girl who was abducted and murdered by a psychopath under their care.

The case is believed to be the first claim against a health authority or trust by a relative of a released patient's murder victim.

Beverly Palmer has been given legal aid to sue Tees health authority and Hartlepool and East Durham NHS trust, which runs Hartlepool general hospital for the alleged trauma caused her. Shaun Armstrong abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered Rosie Palmer, aged four, in June 1994 and mutilated her body.

He had been under the hospital's care since March 1992, and had been re-housed on a council estate, even though a senior social worker warned he was "likely to be a risk to any child he comes into contact with".

In other cases, relatives have been advised that a negligence action against a health authority was unlikely to succeed. The courts are reluctant to hold that public authorities such as the police,



Rosie Palmer, aged four — killed by neighbour

local authorities, and NHS trusts owe a duty of care to individuals when carrying out their public functions.

That was why Jayne Zito — whose husband, Jonathan, was killed by a schizophrenic, Christopher Clunis, brought a civil claim for trespass to the person against Clunis. He, in turn, sued Camden and Islington health authority for negligence over his treatment and release. Ms Zito had hoped to receive compensation from any damages he received, but he lost his case.

In a private hearing yesterday, counsel for Ms Palmer, Robert Sherman, told the court that she was a "psychological wreck" suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and pathological grief reaction. She had been a midwife earning £18,000 after tax but was now a voluntary in-patient in a psychiatric unit.

If her claim succeeds, she could obtain damages totaling £200,000 or more. But as well as proving the trust liable, she faces difficulties in claiming damages for her alleged psychological trauma.

The House of Lords ruled in the Hillsborough case that relatives must be "close in time and space" to the incident to claim damages for post-traumatic stress disorder. Ms Palmer did not see her daughter's abduction or assault, but her lawyers argued that the incident covered the period from when she realised the child was missing to discovery of her body.

The attack and murder took place at Armstrong's home, which was visible from her own, and she was near his home when the body was discovered, although she was not allowed to see it until three days later. It is alleged her trauma was increased by being interrogated by police for 12 hours as a suspect.

An inquiry into Armstrong's care and treatment found failings by the hospital and psychiatrists but concluded that the risk could not have been anticipated.

The hearing continues.

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The hearing continues.

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

A LESBIAN couple lost a test case over access to perks at work yesterday, dealing a severe blow to the campaign for equal rights for gays in the workplace.

The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that South West Trains did not have to provide a railway worker, Lisa Grant, with travel concessions for her partner, Jill Percey.

Campaigners had high hopes of a win because the court's Advocate General had strongly backed their case in an interim opinion last September. In more than 85 per cent of cases the judges follow the Advocate General's opinion.

In addition, a European Court ruling in 1996 that sex discrimination laws cover transsexuals had also been seen as a strong pointer towards the adoption of equal rights for gays.

Yesterday's judgment throws into doubt the chances of success for Terry Perkins, a sailor serving in the Royal Navy in 1995 for being gay, because the judges explicitly stated that European Community law did not cover sexual orientation. He is awaiting a date for a hearing.

A victory for Ms Grant, aged 30, and Ms Percey, 38,

would have had major implications for Britain's employment, pensions and social security systems. The Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Booth QC, argued Ms Grant's case but both the British and French governments fielded lawyers to oppose the claim.

The couple left court downcast. Ms Grant said the decision had come as a shock, particularly after the Advocate General's strong support. "It is now up to national governments to change legislation. We set out to try to raise awareness that there is discrimination in the workplace and we have done what we set out to do."

Ms Grant, a booking clerk, filed an equal pay claim with Southampton industrial tribunal after South West Trains rejected her application for free or reduced travel worth £1,000 a year for Ms Percey, a nurse. She claimed that company rules limiting the perk to spouses or opposite sex partners was a "meaningful relationship" for at least two years.

The tribunal referred the case to Luxembourg, where there was no direct discrimination on grounds of sex because a female gay couple would also have been denied the concession. South West Trains successfully claimed its policy was not discrimination on grounds of sex, but on grounds of sexual orientation, which was not covered by European Community law.

The judges held that the transsexual case covered only a change from one sex to the other and not sexual orientation. "Community law as it stands at present does not cover discrimination based on sexual orientation," they ruled.

The judges said the EC had not yet adopted rules treating gay relationships as equal to marriage or stable opposite-sex partnerships. Nor did most member states treat them as equivalent.

The couple's legal action was backed by Stonewall, the gay rights group, which was "bitterly disappointed" by the ruling. "We think it is wrong but there is no appeal open to us," said a spokeswoman.

The group said it would now switch its campaign to press the Government to bring in legislation to outlaw discrimination against gays. The judges noted that the Treaty of Amsterdam, signed last October, provides for a new article in the EC treaty allowing action to eliminate discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

South West Trains said it would study the court's decision and discuss it with the Association of Train Operating Companies.

Court hears how former policemen 'tried to bribe officer to destroy evidence and halt prosecution'

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

A METROPOLITAN police officer pretended to be corrupt to trap two former colleagues and two men who tried to bribe their way out of trouble, an Old Bailey jury was told yesterday.

The officer agreed to rip up evidence and halt a prosecution in exchange for thousands of pounds.

Detective Chief Inspector Peter Elcock of the Metropolitan police was approached by two former officers, Duncan Hanrahan and Martin King, and asked to assist in two separate cases, John Kelsey-Fry, prosecuting, told the court.

In the first case Mr Elcock was offered £5,000 to ensure that a car fraud charge was dropped. In the second he was offered £10,000 to arrange for the destruction of police notebooks and documents in connection with a charge of grievous bodily harm. Mr Elcock told his superiors of the approach and then secretly taped conversations concerning the planned corruption.

Two men, who can only be named as X and Y, are both

pleading not guilty to a total of four charges of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and corruption of a police officer. The two former officers, Hanrahan and King, have already pleaded guilty.

From this moment on, Mr Elcock played the role of an officer willing to go along with a corrupt relationship, where Y had been charged with grievous bodily harm. Mr Elcock was again approached to help. The figure of £10,000 was mentioned and it was agreed that £2,500 would be a deposit of £2,500. Hanrahan and King had acted as go-betweens, the court heard.

Mr Elcock agreed to get hold of police notebooks and identification documents which would be torn up and flushed down the lavatory.

A device had been used so police were able to hear Y talking to King. Y had said that his family was anxious that the GBH charge be dropped.

The jury was played tape recordings in which negotiations about the size of the alleged bribes took place.

The case continues today.

Mini-domes at a fraction of Greenwich's budget

Jonathan Glancey

THE same government lavishing £78 million on the Greenwich Dome has just spent 78 times less on four mini-domes in Horse Guards Parade, London.

Powerhouse: UK is not meant to be a rival to the dome, but a showcase of contemporary British design commissioned by the Department of Trade and Industry for ASEM2, the second meeting of European and Asian heads of governments and business leaders, to be held in London in April.

The design and contents of the exhibition aimed at wowing senior Asian politicians and business leaders were announced yesterday by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. The brief was delivered to the architects Branson Coates last September, the budget of £1 million agreed, the final design delivered last week.

The silver mini-domes, based on Branson Coates' more permanent design for the National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield, will also welcome the public at £3 a head.

BBC will test privacy right

THE BBC has agreed to allow an 81-year-old widow suing the corporation for trespass over a televised police raid on her home to launch the first claim for breach of privacy in the British courts.

The corporation will not now defend an application by Frances Jarvis to add a claim for breach of confidence to her writ against the corporation, a film company, and two police forces for trespass when they filmed a police raid on her home. The BBC maintains there is no right to privacy in English law, but its last-minute decision means the issue will be argued at the trial in mid-March, not at a preliminary hearing.

The raid in 1994 was in connection with her son who last year was convicted of handling stolen goods and given a six-year sentence. Mrs Jarvis is refusing to comment on the case, and her lawyers asked the Guardian to make it clear she had not instigated any media stories or posed for photographs. A photograph of her with her son in this paper yesterday was taken before he was jailed.

— Clare Dyer

Queen Mother out of hospital

THE Queen Mother left hospital yesterday but will need to recuperate for at least another three months to ensure a full recovery from her emergency hip replacement operation, doctors said today.

Charles Court-Brown, an orthopaedic surgeon at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, said: "She is made of strong stuff — not many people have such an operation at 97. In about three months' time, I'm confident she will be able to do all the things she was doing before."

She left King Edward VII hospital, in central London, three weeks after surgery following a fracture of her left hip at Sandringham, the Queen's estate in Norfolk, on January 25.

Man bailed in murder hunt

A SECOND MAN was arrested by detectives investigating the murders of Lin and Megan Russell. Kent police confirmed yesterday. The 37-year-old man from Gillingham in Kent was questioned at the end of January and released on police bail to report back to police next month.

Mrs Russell, 43, was murdered along her daughter Megan, aged six, in Chilenden, Kent, in July 1996. Her other daughter Josie, 10, was left for dead. Michael Stone, aged 37, also from Gillingham, has already been charged with murder and attempted murder.

Ban sought on use of raw eggs in restaurants

James Melkie

USE of raw eggs in restaurant dishes, from mayonnaise to cheesecake, may have to be banned, food safety monitors said yesterday.

The risk of poisoning from salmonella bacteria was so great that notification on menus that raw eggs have been used might not be enough, according to local authorities, which police hygiene regulations.

The authorities were also concerned by continuing outbreaks in nursing and other residential homes where people might be vulnerable to infection.

Ten years after the salmonella-in-eggs scare the Local Government Association and

the Local Authorities' Co-ordinating Body on Food and Trading Standards have called for the Government to consider a ban on use of raw eggs. Failing that, there must be a tougher hygiene regime and a public education campaign about the dangers. Raw eggs accounted for many of the nearly 30,000 food poisoning cases put down to salmonella last year.

The two bodies dismissed claims that alternatives made from pasteurised eggs did not taste the same.

The Government said there was no question of a ban. It is already bruised from accusations of running a nanny state following the beef-on-the-bone ban in December.

The Department of Health reiterated its long-standing

advice that elderly people, the sick, babies, toddlers and pregnant women should not eat raw eggs.

The local authorities, in a memorandum to the Commons agriculture committee's inquiry into food safety, said they were concerned by the use of raw eggs by caterers in uncooked or slightly cooked dishes, and their appearance in recipe suggestions and on cookery programmes.

They questioned whether consumers were well informed enough to make judgments about risks if restaurants were to label dishes made using raw eggs. "Some might argue that the risks are such that in commercial operations, the continued use of raw eggs should be prohibited."

Southall Rail Accident Inquiry

Notice is hereby given that the Health and Safety Commission has, under powers in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974, appointed Professor John Uff, QC to hold an inquiry into the collision between an empty freight train and a passenger train near Southall station on 19 September 1997. The HSC has also appointed Major Tony King, OBE as Technical Assessor to the inquiry. The inquiry will be heard in public and will open to discuss procedural matters at 10.00am on Tuesday 24th February 1998 at The Plasterer's Hall, 1 London Wall, London EC2. The inquiry will then adjourn until such time as the main hearings can begin.

Further information may be obtained from The Inquiry Secretary, Southall Inquiry Secretariat, Health and Safety Commission, Room 2.12, Rose Court, 2 Southway Bridge Road, London SE1 9HS, by telephone on 0171 717 6609, or by e-mail to Inquiry.Team.Southall@hse.gov.uk.

Iraq crisis: The clock is running

Clinton strives for hearts and minds

Martin Kettle in Washington

THE White House will today step up its efforts to win the hearts and minds of the American people for military action against Iraq.

In a speech yesterday President Clinton said that a bombing campaign against Baghdad would not destroy all Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons, and warned Americans to expect casualties if continuing diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis were unsuccessful.

Today three of the administration's key figures — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, defence secretary William Cohen and national security adviser Sandy Berger — will address a nationally televised "town meeting" in Ohio in an attempt to rally public opinion behind the Iraq strategy set out by Mr Clinton.

'Baghdad must agree, and soon, to free and full access to any of these sites'

A White House spokesman said: "We will be increasing the pace of the dialogue both with the American people and the international community so they will understand our determination to see that Iraq complies with United Nations Security Council resolutions."

In Cairo, his first stop in a Middle East "public diplomacy mission", the US special envoy David Newton said yesterday: "No dates, no deadlines have been established to my knowledge." But he added: "Circumstances don't allow us to wait for ever. It's clear the clock is running."

In his 30-minute speech to military chiefs at the Pentagon, Mr Clinton said the US was "prepared to act" and the objective of a military strike would be to "seriously diminish the threat" posed by Iraq's chemical and biological arsenal. But he added: "A military operation cannot destroy all the weapons of mass

destruction capability." Trying to keep up the international pressure on Iraq and prepare domestic opinion for the realities of conflict, he said that sending troops into combat was "sometimes the only answer", adding: "No military action, however, is risk-free."

He said a diplomatic settlement as "by far our preference", but President Saddam had to keep the promises he made after the Gulf war in 1991 to provide full access to weapons sites.

Iraq had to meet "a clear, immutable, reasonable, simple standard" set by the Security Council, he said.

"Iraq must agree, and soon, to free, full and unfettered access to these sites anywhere in the country. There can be no dilution or diminishment of the integrity of the inspection system that Unscow has put in place."

Mr Cohen said on television that the US would send up to 6,000 more troops to the Gulf, twice the number its regional commander, General Anthony Zinni, said last week were necessary. They will take the number of US troops in the region to more than 30,000.

They were being sent "for purely defensive purposes" to deter Iraq from moving against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, Mr Cohen said on CNN's Larry King Live programme.

Yesterday a Gallup opinion poll showed a clear majority of Americans — 54 per cent to 41 per cent — now favouring a diplomatic solution as opposed to a military solution in Iraq.

On February 1, Gallup found the reverse: 46 per cent for a diplomatic solution and 50 per cent for a military one.

But public opinion behind military action if Mr Clinton chose that course.

To reports that the potential military targets had been increased to "thousands of aim points", Mr Clinton's Republican opponents continued to try to extend the policy objectives of any action.

The Senate majority leader, Trent Lott, said: "The doctrine has to be roll-back, not containment."

A presidential hopeful, John McCain, called on the administration to "destabilise and overthrow" President Saddam.

Martin Woolcott, page 8



Students are given weapons training by an army instructor at a college in Baghdad yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH BY VIKTOR KOROTAYEV

Disco fans dance to their leader's beat

Tigris day out

Maggie O'Kane in Baghdad

THE morning disco boat run by DJ Beats is pulling out from the docks, it's just after 10, and 18-year-old Salev Kasim is taking to the stage at the back. He's tall, gay, and very beautiful.

Flicking back his streaked blond hair, he climbs on to a seat, pumps his hips, waggles his bottom and dares the other boys to challenge him.

They're off down the Tigris, Iraqi teenagers and twentysomethings dancing to La Bamba on the mucky waters of Baghdad's great river, the West Bank Organisation has said, has killed tens of thousands of Iraqis without affecting their leader.

wants to dance, not talk. "It's all in God's hands," he says, with a delicate, dismissive flick of his wrist.

Ali Khalil Hussein, aged 26, has taken the day off from his ladies' underwear stall in Baghdad's main market. He's chatting up a young woman with frizzy hair and much blue eye shadow. He too is leaving the war to God. "What can we do?" he said.

The boat ride takes two hours and DJ Beats keeps it spinning through giant disco amplifiers that torment the Tigris's three varieties of carp.

The boat is filled with young men in check shirts and leather jackets; the girls favour baseball caps and lots of lippliner. Along the shore is the evidence of seven years of sanctions which the West Bank Organisation has said, has killed tens of thousands of Iraqis without affecting their leader.

The first of the two new palaces Saddam Hussein has built is a giant Spanish-style hacienda; its balconies, the length of London buses, glare out over the road. The second is like a giant over-iced birthday cake with colonnades and balustrades and miles of baby-pink marble. A soft

'Me, I'd like to drink Madeleine Albright's blood for running round the Arab nations trying to turn them against our country'

white fence shields the palace from the city, the people and their pain. It is Haifa's 28th birthday. "You have to sing and dance, there's no point sitting in the house. My mother's going crazy saying 'The war is coming, we will die', on and on."

She has osteoporosis and has been in terrible pain for nearly five years. She can't walk now, and we can't get the injections she needs because of the sanctions.

"Me, I'd like to drink Madeleine Albright's blood for running round the Arab nations trying to turn them against our country"

says: "They can destroy our country, destroy our children, but they will never kill our love for our president, Saddam Hussein."

It's a public boat, no one would dare criticise the president openly, but no body seems to want to. Seven years ago when the Gulf war began it was different: people wouldn't say

outright that they despised his leadership, but you got the message.

The vigour with which this generation of Iraqis, most of whom have known nothing but war and sanctions, defend their president is startling.

"Without him we would be completely lost," said the underwear salesman. "He is the one who is keeping us alive. The Americans and Israelis want to destroy Iraq. Saddam is not the problem, they want our oil, and it would be the same with another president."

"And what about President Saddam having wealth and palaces while everyone else suffers under the sanctions? He's our president, why shouldn't he live in a palace?"

Faisal Mehed is 26. He trained as an engineer, but now sells biscuits in the market because, under the sanctions, there are no new buildings to engineer.

"There are no chemical or biological weapons left. Are they going to go on looking for ever? Is my house next? Are they going to look under my bed, search my clothes? Do I have any rights?" he said.

"Saddam is standing up to them. I respect him for it. For me Bill Clinton is like a bad Batman and Tony Blair is a little Robin hiding behind his cloak."

Downtown in the Baghdad Lumar Park, the funfair is operating and there are queues for the dodgems. As his gesture towards world peace, one stallholder will accept no money for a spin from us foreigners.

"You are guests here in our country and you are welcome," says Allah Klaina, aged 35, who was an architect in better times. "We don't care if there is a war or not, we're used to threats by now. We have faith in our leader. That is why we are still strong."

Secret war plans target Saddam's levers of power

The aims

Baron Colman in Washington

AS PRESIDENT Bill Clinton and his advisers embark this week on what amounts to a marketing campaign for air strikes against Iraq, their evolving war plan goes well beyond the emphasis they place in public on damaging prohibited weapons programmes, according to participants in the domestic debate.

Defence and foreign policy officials say the president's national security team remains divided over the aims and expectations of the intended bombardment. Frustrated senior officials say the targets listed in the United States Central Command's forward air headquarters in Eskan,

'We're not going to leave his core infrastructure alone as in the past'

Saudi Arabia, are still subject to daily revision.

But as bombing plans have expanded to encompass what one senior official describes as "thousands of aim points" in Iraq, a large share of the firepower is to target the apparatus maintaining President Saddam Hussein in power, from secret police networks to Ba'ath party organs.

The aim is to crush Saddam Hussein's defiance by threatening his internal control.

The administration does not apparently wish to advertise this intention, because it fears the plan may not work. But Mr Clinton's stated intention — to damage forbidden weapons stocks from the air — has been criticised as too limited.

When critics said Iraq could quickly reconstitute its biological and chemical weapons programmes, the secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, declared last week: "We reserve the right for a follow-up strike."

tion with that strategy in the military establishment, several senior officials say.

"We're not going to leave his core infrastructure alone as in the past ... If he feels threatened enough with his regime stability, then he has no choice but to acquiesce. It's typical dictator mentality that the biggest thing that drives him is holding on to power."

A senior official said: "The best way to hurt him is his core infrastructure. We're not going to leave that alone as we have in the past ... If he feels threatened enough with his regime stability, then he has no choice but to acquiesce. It's typical dictator mentality that the biggest thing that drives him is holding on to power."

Leadership targets in the 1991 war were concentrated largely in central Baghdad. But the intervening seven years, defence and intelligence officials say, have revealed more about President Saddam's mechanisms of control, including regional secret police centres and the Security Organisation, run by his younger son, Qusay.

Among new sources of information have been thousands of reconnaissance flights in support of UN inspectors and the 1995 defection to Jordan of Hussein Kamel, a top lieutenant and son-in-law of the president.

"Since the Gulf war he has made a whole bunch of different changes in where and how he puts those key components that support him, many of which are not downtown," said one official. — *Washington Post*



Palestinian schoolboys hold an Iraqi flag at a pro-Saddam march in Bethlehem yesterday

Military attack could ignite Palestinian fury

The region

Julian Borger in Jericho

THE head of the Palestinian secret police on the West Bank said a military attack on Iraq would sink the Middle East into a vicious circle of turmoil and provoke what might spread out of control.

Colonel Jibril Rajoub, widely considered Yasser Arafat's most powerful lieutenant, said there was tension "24 hours a day" between Palestinian and Israeli forces.

As he spoke at the Preventative Security Academy in the Jordan Valley town of Jericho, Palestinian youths in Bethlehem were defying their leaders' ban by staging a pro-Saddam demonstration.

Yesterday the militant Muslim organisation Hamas threatened more suicide

bomb attacks on Israelis in the event of air strikes against the Iraqi president.

Col Rajoub said that Palestinian anger was rising after the breakdown in peace talks with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, whom he accused of exploiting the world's preoccupation with the Iraqi crisis to expand Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories.

The Palestinians say the settlements contravene the peace agreements and United Nations Security Council resolutions. An attack on a fellow Arab regime for contraventions, he said, could ignite fury into open revolt.

"This will create anger and frustration. Everyone is asking why America is not using the same means against Israel."

"God forbid if there is a military attack, I think the whole region will enter a vicious circle and then there will be a lot of surprises."

The Palestinian position on Iraq is ambivalent. While warning against the use of force, Col Rajoub repeated Mr Arafat's call for President Saddam to comply in full with the UN resolutions.

He denied reports that his men were stockpiling arms, but he made it clear that if the tension erupted in violence and Israeli troops tried to enter areas run by the Palestinian Authority (PA), his forces would put up a fight.

"We will not receive them with roses," he said.

Col Rajoub's relations with Israel appear to be at their lowest point since the Madrid peace talks in 1991. "We have no confidence in Israelis, who are lying more than they are breathing," he said.

"We are not preparing ourselves towards military confrontation. We don't like it. We don't want it."

"But all options are open ... We are not going to raise a white flag to Mr Netanyahu."

Bahrain jolts the US by rejecting air strikes

Backing out

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

THE Gulf state of Bahrain delivered another blow to President Clinton's hopes of building an anti-Saddam coalition among Arab countries yesterday when it withdrew its support for military strikes against Iraq.

An announcement by Bahrain that it has not approved the use of its territories by the US to launch airborne attacks clearly demonstrated that in spite of weeks of shuttle diplomacy, Mr Clinton has failed in the region to win the strategic support and political cover needed for strikes.

The defence secretary, William Cohen, said last week that both Bahrain and Kuwait were willing to allow US and British forces to launch strikes from their territory.

Washington badly needs land facilities to launch punitive strikes. But even Kuwait continues to argue for a diplomatic solution — although it has allowed in US stealth bombers and troops.

The biggest blow to Washington has been the refusal of Saudi Arabia to offer its military bases.

Bahrain's information minister, Mohammed Ibrahim Mutawae, said yesterday: "Bahrain believes it is necessary to redouble the political efforts and give diplomatic activity its full opportunity to reach a peaceful solution."

Earlier yesterday Bahrain joined its Gulf neighbours, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, in rejecting a strike.

Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa said: "The first priority should be given to the diplomatic effort and a peaceful solution to the crisis, no matter what it takes, because we fear the other alternative in this confrontation will be no less than a catastrophe to this region, the Arab world and the Middle East."

Iran's supreme leader yesterday strongly criticised the US for making threats.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a speech on Tehran radio: "America is making it a rule to intervene and have a violent presence around the world ... What the Americans believe deep down is that the world is an empire and America is its emperor."

He said Iran did not feel threatened by the US military presence but vowed Tehran would "react with all its might" to any real US threat.

Lebanon's foreign minister, Faris Bouze, said an attack on Iraq was "totally unjustifiable" and warned against helping the US. "I want to warn that history has no mercy and would record forever the names of those who

participated in spilling brotherly blood."

He added: "Military action against Iraq is totally unjustifiable ... as the Security Council stops short of executing its resolutions with other countries. Israel continues to occupy part of south Lebanon 20 years after a UN Security Council resolution called for a withdrawal."

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has sent a message to Baghdad that he will not launch a pre-emptive strike against Iraq, it was revealed yesterday.

The message was conveyed via Moscow at the weekend after Mr Netanyahu met the Russian ambassador to Israel. Last week Iraq told Israel, via the same channel, that it had the intention not the ability "to attack Israel in the event of a military strike by US-led forces."

Meanwhile, Qatar's foreign minister said on his return from Baghdad that Iraq was showing some flexibility. But Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr al-Thani said President Saddam was waiting for the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, to visit Baghdad.

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Blackmail craze holds Germany to ransom

Ian Traynor in Bonn

POLICE in Baden-Württemberg are scouring supermarket shelves for baby food poisoned by a blackmailer demanding 900,000 marks (£275,000) from the Nestlé food multinational.

The same force has just arrested a 46-year-old printer who allegedly tried to extort 5 million marks (£1.72 million) from Daimler-Benz, Germany's biggest company, by threatening to shoot drivers of Mercedes cars.

In neighbouring Bavaria a man has been demanding 5 million marks from the Lidl supermarket chain under threat of contaminating the food it sells. The company has opened a bank account from which he can withdraw 1,000 marks (£340) a day.

And in Nuremberg a blackmailer is demanding a million

year. Most involve the food industry, generating a panic about food safety which appears to satisfy the blackmailers' craving for publicity. The publicity then inspires copycats, the police say.

There are now six times as many cases — about 150 a year — as there were in the mid-1980s, putting Germany with Britain at the top of the international league for blackmail through product tampering.

Big firms are training their senior managers to cope with blackmail, and are resigning to large losses caused by people's reluctance to buy the products of companies known to be blackmail targets, and by the need to recall products.

The Swiss-based Nestlé, the world's biggest manufacturer of food products, is currently suffering at least two blackmail attempts. An unresolved case last year, when tubes of mayonnaise were injected with cyanide, is estimated to have cost it up to 50 million marks.

In the 1980s seven people died in the United States from taking painkillers contaminated with cyanide by a blackmailer holding the drugs giant Johnson and Johnson to ransom. The incident is estimated to have cost the company up to \$500 million in lost sales.

No one has died in Germany's current epidemic of blackmail cases, and the police say that none of the blackmailers has successfully absconded with the money.

In the early 1990s a blackmailer named after a cartoon character, Dagobert, teased and tricked the Berlin police for five years. Sentenced in 1995 to almost eight years, he became a national hero and the model for the growing band of blackmailers.

"He was just a common criminal, but he was intelligent, diligent, took the micky out of the police and had a Robin Hood image," says Mr Von zur Muehlen.

"Many of those operating now are of low intelligence."

There's a boom here. As a phenomenon it can't really be explained'

marks from the Noris bank for keeping quiet about confidential client information.

Cyanide-spiked mayonnaise, baby food laced with pesticide, strawberry jam adulterated with rat poison — these are a few of the cases exercising criminologists, company boardrooms and the German CID as blackmailers, mostly amateurs, try to extort easy money from industrialists.

"There's a boom in this kind of crime in Germany at the moment. It's much worse here than anywhere else," says Rainer von zur Muehlen, head of the association of independent German security consultants. "It's a phenomenon that can't really be explained."

There are believed to have been 18 cases already this

Impressionists' urban landscape



Claude Monet's oil painting The Gare Saint-Lazare. His 11 views of the Paris station join scenes by Manet, Caillebotte and other Impressionists

Studio with a view solves Manet mystery

A FEW yards from the Café des Gourmets on the corner of the rue Médéric, near the Gare Saint-Lazare, stands an anonymous block of flats built in 1860. Across the courtyard, stairs lead to second-floor apartments whose east-facing windows once overlooked wasteland.

Number 8 rue Médéric could become a place of pilgrimage. After a long hunt, a London art historian, Juliet Wilson-Baron, has solved one of the mysteries of Impressionism. She has identified the second floor as the site of Edouard Manet's lost atelier, the rented studio where he worked for 10 years, painting masterpieces such as Olympia and

Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe. A change in the street name from rue Guyot more than 120 years ago persuaded earlier researchers that the studio had been demolished. But using city archives, Ms Wilson-Baron discovered the location while planning an exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay dedicated to artists who made the area around Paris's oldest railway station one of the best-known urban landscapes.

She has also cleared up another minor mystery: the perspective of Manet's Le Chemin de fer, in which his favourite model, the Olympian Victorine Meurent, sits by railings, holding a book and a dog, while a lit-

tle girl looks out on a steam-filled landscape. The scene, painted in 1872-73, was recognisably situated near the Pont de l'Europe, in the late 19th-century Quartier de l'Europe around the station.

scured by a station warehouse a few years after the picture was finished. The exhibition Manet, Monet, La Gare Saint-Lazare is the first comprehensive artistic view of an area transformed by reconstruc-

tion during the second empire. It links paintings and streets to many innovative artistic and literary figures, including the poets Stéphane Mallarmé and Charles Baudelaire. Le Chemin de fer was the first painting finished in

the Saint-Petersbourg studio, and was at the centre of a row over its artistic value. Cartoons caricature the two figures as trapped behind prison bars, while references to unseen trains chugging into the Gare Saint-Lazare from the Impressionists' country retreats in the western suburbs and Normandy is usually missed.

"The picture can be considered from now on as the artist's homage to his new atelier, and a reflection on his own creation, which was and would remain studio work, even for his supposed open-air studies," Ms Wilson-Baron said.

Lesser Impressionists from the Batignolles school, including Gustave Caillebotte and Norbert Goeneutte, painted the station or its surroundings either before or after Claude Monet asked permission to work on his Gare Saint-Lazare series among the rush of trains and passengers in 1877.

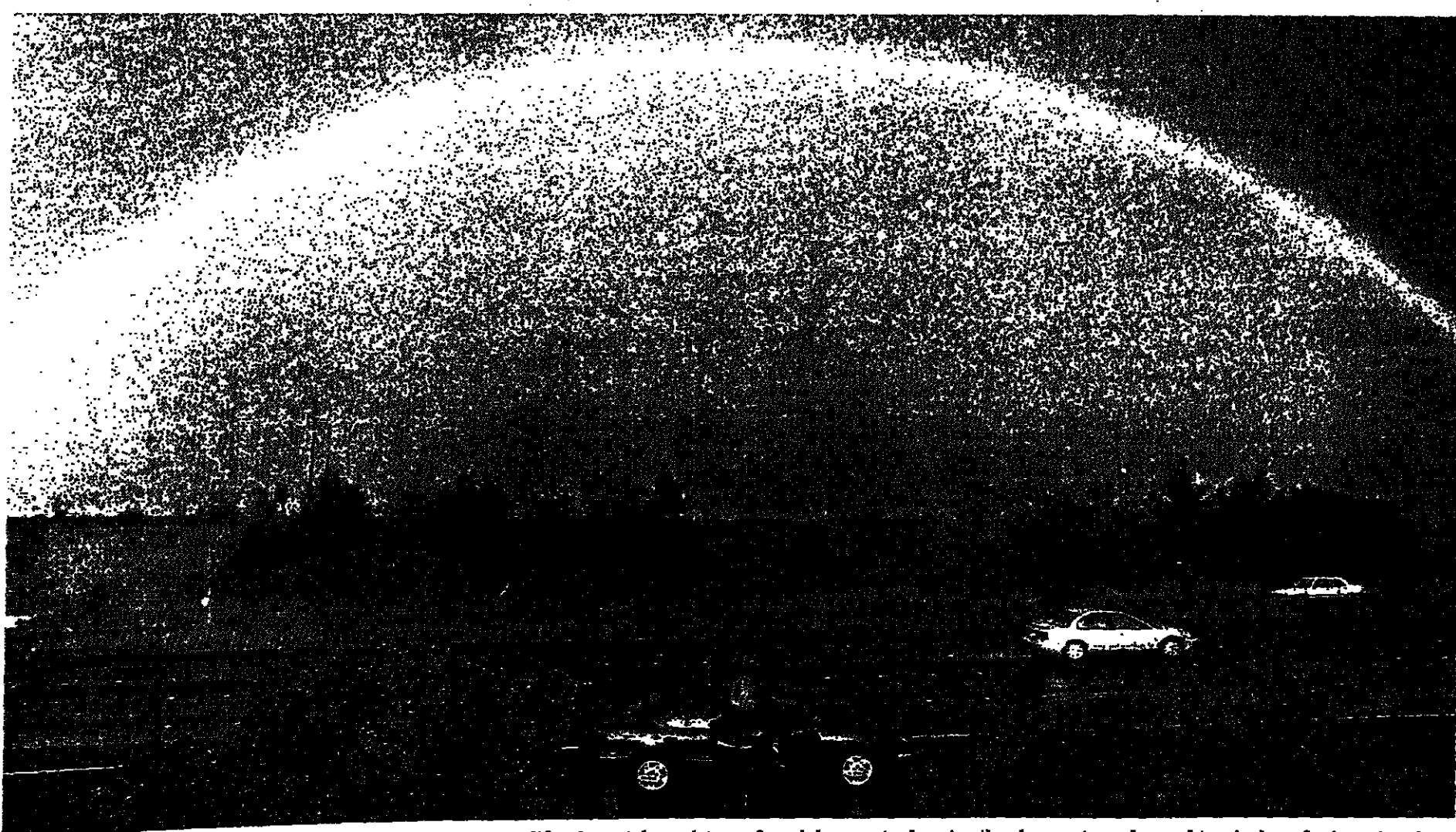
At the time Emile Zola, whose novel La Bête Humaine begins with a description of the station, called on his Impressionist friends to turn to industrial subjects and find "poetry in railway stations in the way their fathers found it in forests and rivers".

Nine of Monet's 11 Saint-Lazare scenes are in the exhibition, which continues until May 17.

It is the first comprehensive artistic view of an area transformed by development

But there was no explanation for the building in the background, which Ms Wilson-Baron has identified as Manet's second atelier at 24 rue de Saint-Petersbourg. She visited it and found it almost unchanged. But its entrance was ob-

Rainy days



A motorist gets out of her car on Highway 101 near Novato, California, to take a picture of a rainbow yesterday. Another heavy storm dropped two inches of rain on Northern California, which is expecting only one dry day before the next storm hits

Taiwan elbows its way to the front

Andrew Higgins in Taipei

IN THE smouldering wreckage at Chiang Kai-shek Airport lies the mangled fulfilment of prophecy that even the Communist Party propagandist in Beijing who made it must now regret. Furious that Taiwan was making diplomatic capital out of Asia's economic woes, Beijing unleashed a poisonous polemic last month, warning that Taiwanese officials risked being "dragged into the inferno" if they continued using the region's crisis to expand relations with cash-strapped neighbouring states.

"Often when a house

catches fire, a handful of looters will rush into the blaze to snatch and grab anything handy," asserted a commentary in the China Daily. Taiwan would be "singled".

Among the more than 200 people who were incarcerated when an Airbus A300 crashed in a fireball at Taipei airport on Monday were the governor of Taiwan's central bank and his aides: the leaders of a bold and successful campaign to pierce the diplomatic blockade by Beijing.

They were returning from a conference of bankers in Bali, the latest in a round of economic conclaves that had helped Taiwan shake off its pariah status and find a new, increasingly influential voice.

Taiwan, which has weathered Asia's economic meltdown far better than its neighbours, had begun to enter the region's central banks, finance ministries and even presidential mansions through the main entrance.

"We were made most welcome," said Chiang Pin-kung, its chief economic policy maker and impresario of a recent four-country tour by 60 Taiwanese business moguls. "We met two presidents, two prime ministers and more than 10 ministers."

Travelling in their slipstream and enjoying much the same courtesy was Taiwan's prime minister, Vincent Siew. Together with his fellow Taiwanese, Mr Siew

visited Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia — a breakthrough for a country normally confined to the few states which have yet to shift their allegiance to Beijing.

Taiwan's new clout was in evidence again last week when Malaysia's deputy prime minister and finance minister, Dabuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, flew into Taipei to talk economics. A Taiwanese bank promised to invest a \$225 million in Malaysia's fragile stock market.

China took a predictably dim view. But, with \$51.8 billion in foreign exchange reserves and \$22.5 billion invested in south-east Asia, Taiwan is not

so easily shunned by neighbours in need.

Monday's air crash will slow down the offensive. The grounding yesterday of its Airbus A300 planes threatens to ground the officials whose travels have helped bring Taiwan out of the cold. Such setbacks do not change the logic propelling Taiwan's regional push, however.

Jason Hu, Taiwan's foreign minister, says: "We are very close geographically. We are very close economically. We have 350,000 labourers from these countries working here. Why should we stand apart?" So long as Taiwan has cash to spare, it will open doors that Beijing would prefer to keep closed.

Jeffrey Koo, a Taiwanese banker who has played a leading role in rallying support for needy neighbours, flaunts his own considerable means and has helped Taiwan do the same. Chairman of the China-trust commercial bank, he has travelled the region tirelessly trying to stitch together schemes to repair the damage of Asia's economic storm. The main motive, he says, is self-interest. "We want to help these countries because we have billions of dollars invested in them. We want to save our own money."

But he acknowledges other dividends, too. "If we earn their appreciation and they treat us better, then what is wrong with that?"

News in brief

Hun Sen clears way for prince's return

CAMBODIAN strongman Hun Sen, bowing to international pressure yesterday, accepted a Japanese proposal that appears to clear the way for the return from exile of the former co-prime minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh and his participation in the elections scheduled for July.

Under the formula, Prince Ranariddh will be tried in his absence for the offences the Hun Sen government says caused the fighting last July when the prince was ousted. He will then receive an amnesty, allowing him to take part in the election. As a condition of the deal, the prince's troops must agree to a ceasefire in the fighting that has rumbled on in the north-west since the coup. — Nick Cumming-Bruce, Bangkok.

Belgian cover-up rejected

PARENTS of children abducted and murdered by a paedophile ring in Belgium criticised yesterday the findings of a 200-page parliamentary report which blames the delay in making arrests on police incompetence rather than an official cover-up.

Despite several searches, the police failed to find two eight-year-old girls locked in the cellar of the chief suspect, Marc Dutroux. Their bodies and those of two teenage girls were later found buried in his garden. The report said it had found no proof to support the widespread accusation that Mr Dutroux and his associates were protected from arrest. — Stephen Bates, Brussels.

Kaunda to be charged

THE Zambian government said yesterday that it would charge former president Kenneth Kaunda with concealing his part in a failed coup in October. The state prosecutor said the charge — misprision of treason — would be formally put to the 73-year-old Mr Kaunda today. He is among 92 people detained under emergency laws invoked after a failed coup. None has been formally charged and Mr Kaunda has been placed under house arrest. — Reuters, Lusaka.

US flag is star in Tehran

AFTER 18 years of burning the Stars and Stripes, Iranians cheered it yesterday as it was carried in Tehran at the opening ceremony of an international wrestling tournament. The United States flag received more applause than any of the other 16 national flags, apart from that of the host. The team of five US wrestlers waved back enthusiastically. — AP, Tehran.

Ernst Jünger dies at 102

ERNST Jünger, whose writings and life captured for many Germans the complexities of this century as they experienced it, died yesterday aged 102. His first book, In Storms of Steel, published in 1920, glorified the horrors of the first world war and promoted him to the ranks of the militant nationalists whose strident writings helped pave the way for the Third Reich. Although he later denounced Hitler's regime, and its consequences, he never completely distanced himself from his early nationalist writings. — Reuters, Bonn. Obituary, page 10

Unkindest cut for Spielberg

JAMAICA'S censors have cut the opening scene of Steven Spielberg's new film Amistad, saying its depiction of a slave ship revolt is too graphic for Jamaican audiences. The cinematographic authority also prohibited the movie from being shown to people under 18. "It is an adult movie," said its president, the Rev Stanford Wehley. More than 80 per cent of Jamaicans are descended from West Africans brought to the New World by European slave traders. — AP, Kingston.

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

YOU will have been no less horrified than I was yesterday, to read of the iniquitous life ban imposed on my old friend Michael Winner by the owner of Le Gavroche, Michael Roux alleges — all there is no need not to underline the absurdity — that Michael was very rude to a receptionist, when informed that he could not have a table for dinner with Joan Collins. Michael is outraged when we call. "It's the most untrue story ever written about me," he exclaims. "This chap is just hanging on my coat-tails for a bit of publicity. Him banning me from Le Gavroche is like banning me from the lady's toilet at Doncaster station... Sorry?... It doesn't affect me." In truth, we say, the story just doesn't ring true: the very thought of Michael uttering the phrase "Do you know who I am?"... preposterous. "It's utter nonsense," Michael agrees. "Quite, quite untrue." The campaign to clear his name begins here, tomorrow.

WHILE a caravan of fine home furnishings makes a stately procession towards Lord Irvine's splendid residence, they travel in the opposite direction from Number 11 Downing Street. The ancient carpet in the State Room there has been removed by the health and safety people, leaving bare boards, and is not about to be replaced.

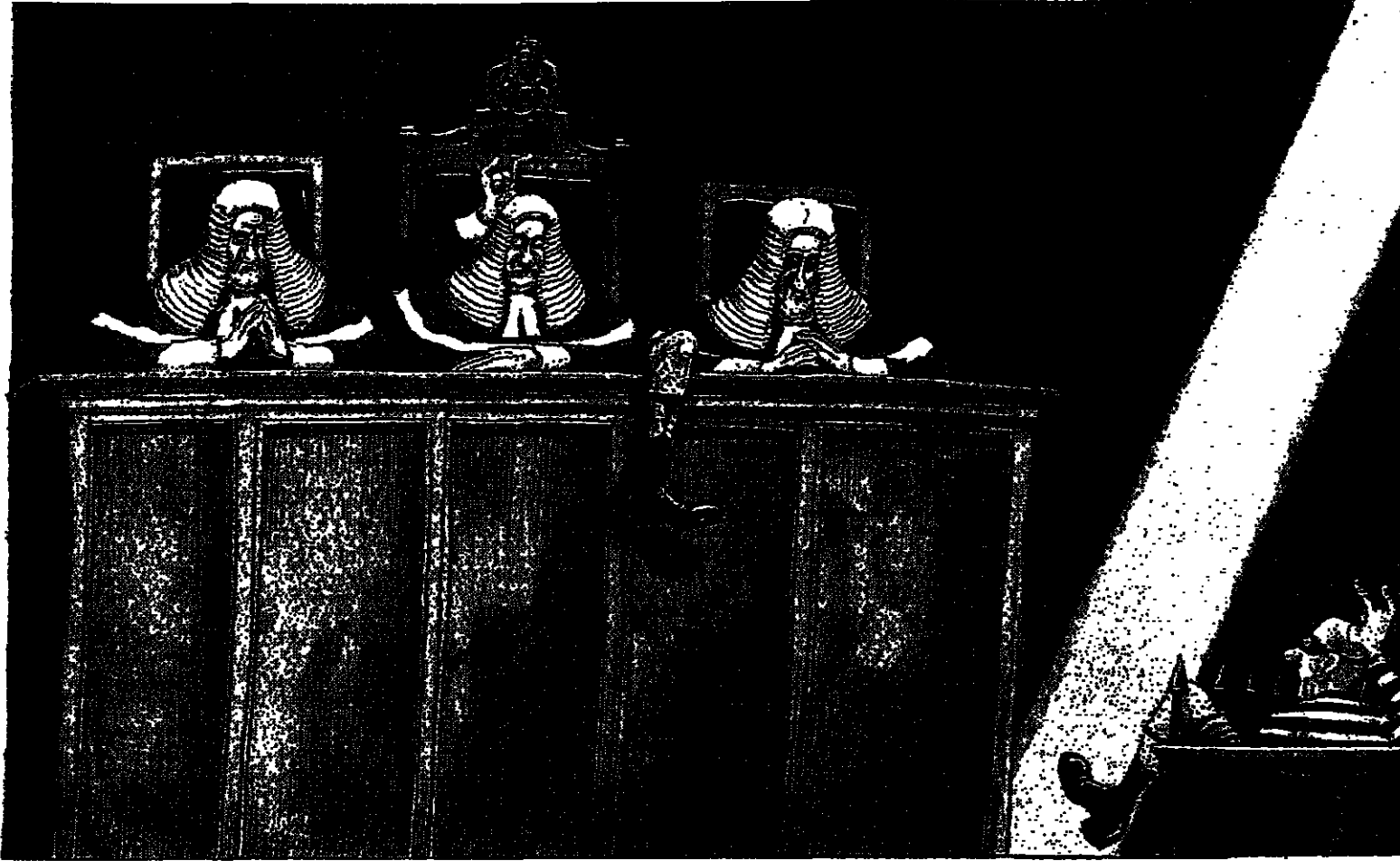
JOURNALISM welcomes an exciting new talent. Above an Express article about Mohammed Al Fayed last Friday (a pretty bland piece at that) was the byline "A man too frightened to be named" (one of the Lincolnshire "Too-frightened-to-be-nameds, we presume). We salute him for upholding the Express's global reputation for fearlessness, and look forward to celebrating the inevitable clutch of awards.

UNAFRAID to expose himself as an Al Fayed enemy is Lord Harris of High Cross, who seeks to raise £150,000 for Neil Hamilton to sue the passport-coverter for libel. "We've raised almost two thirds already but there has been some confusion," says the blamish Thatcherite ideologue. "We're only collecting pledges, but some people have been sending money." Cash in envelopes? Mm. "Well, quite. I had to send back a £10 note only today." Lord Harris's sensibility knows few bounds, and only last week, on BBC's Friday Night Armistice, he discussed another passion... his sovereign right to smoke a pipe on trains. In a bid to draw the analogy, Armando Iannucci spent the interview making fart noises, and letting off stinkbombs. But did his Lordship enjoy the experience? "Well, I thought it was going to be quite jolly," he explains, sadly, "but the chap was very serious. Actually, he didn't seem to be terribly well."

THE world scratched its head yesterday, puzzled by the quietude. On February 5, under the splash headline "Blitz on Saddam just 12 days away", an Independent "exclusive" insisted that air strikes would begin yesterday. "Sources in Washington" were quite specific. And then nothing. "It's blown our strategic planning to smithereens," a senior Kremlin source said last night. "The Independent's never let us down like this before."

THE American genius for sensible litigation achieves a new mark in Connecticut. Bizarre magazine reports. A judge there is being sued for sexual harassment after Kodak, his golden retriever, nuzzled the crotches of several women in his office.

I FEEL I SHOULD DECLARE THAT I'M A FREEMASON.



Blair is desperate for new friends — so he alienates the old ones

Jonathan Freedland



FOR one who is the very model of the modern man, Tony Blair makes an unlikely candidate for the time warp. He is *so now*, he couldn't possibly be passé. He wears chinos and denim; he peppers his speech with "y'knows" and "I means"; he doesn't look a complete prat at the Brit Awards. He is married to a working woman who earns more than he does, he plays electric guitar and there's olive oil in his kitchen. His slogan was "the future, not the past."

And yet Blair's own Mr 90s occasionally looks like a man trapped in the 1980s. Often he and his administration seem bent on re-fighting the conflicts of that era and placating its demons. The only difference is that now, Labour is on the winning side.

This month's trip to Washington was a case in point. No one denies there are sound arguments for the US strategy on Iraq, just as there are robust reasons to hesitate. But the instant, unwavering support offered to President Clinton by Mr Blair seemed to originate elsewhere. The sheer speed of it spoke less of a deeply-considered approach to Iraq than a Government instinct to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Washington.

The Blair high command seemed to calculate that for a Labour government to do otherwise would be political folly. Labour clashed with Washington when it was a party of losers, in the sad days when Mr Kinnock had to haggle with the White House over how many paltry minutes he had had in the Oval Office with Ronald Reagan. In the 1980s ideological animosity with an American president was the mark of the British political winner.

Labour probably reckoned that since Margaret Thatcher allowed Britain to be used as a launch pad for the attack on

Libya in 1986, Tony Blair should be the first recruit to heed Uncle Bill's call for arms. The policy itself may well be sound; the point is, Labour would never even have considered the alternative. A disagreement with the US is just not in the script. Equally, the devotion to Rupert Murdoch's press is no less a legacy of the 1980s. Labour took a hammering for being on the wrong side of the Sun in those years. Mr Blair is determined not to make the same mistake again, even if that means trimming policy on privacy legislation and predatory pricing.

THE trade unions want new rights of recognition: if more than 50 per cent of balloted employees vote for it in their workplace, the TUC says a union should be accepted automatically. The CBI doesn't like that, and Mr Blair has to choose sides. But the demons of the past say backing the unions over business is bad news — and those 80s voices will be taunting the Prime Minister right now.

On policy after policy, Labour's decisions seem informed by a sensibility left over from the last decade. Single mothers were an obvious target for a cut in benefits 15 years ago they were routinely condemned as slatterns and scroungers.

Maths times tables and homework for kids make good 80s sense, too — to see off the "laxity left" tag that became attached to Labour education authorities a decade ago. Teenage curfews served the same purpose, exorcising the soft-on-crime demon that haunted the party back then.

The logic to all this is hard and clear. Labour got elected by constructing a coalition, grafting new supporters on to the old — chiefly by reassuring the once-sceptical. Tony Blair is insistent on keeping

up the strategy, seizing the daggers which once wounded Labour and turning them around. He will coddle big business, threaten Baghdad and grovel to the Queen simply because those are things Labour did not do before.

But such a path is pocked with pitfalls. For one thing, in their desperation to win over the new, Labour risks alienating the old. Black voters, for example, may have felt more than a little abandoned last week when — after they had

Black voters will feel abandoned

backed Labour through the wilderness years — Tony Blair delivered a gushing eulogy for the man who had done most to legitimise hostility towards them. By praising Enoch Powell as "great", the PM delighted his new friends at the Daily Mail but disappointed those who had been on his side much longer.

The political operatives' response to such concern is that black voters, like all core Labour supporters, have nowhere else to go. That's true — now. But, come the next election, Labour will need those stalwarts to knock on doors and do the work. If they feel trampled over in the stampede to expand the Labour coalition, they will have no enthusiasm for the task.

A second risk is the failure to realise what bound together the winning alliance in the first place. The glue was the Conservative Party. Without the Tories as a common enemy, Labour's coalition becomes much harder to cohere. Differences between loyalists and converts were

buried in the near-universal determination to turf out the last bunch; but as memories of the Major era fade, so does that ease of purpose.

But the greatest problem with the appease-the-80s approach to coalition-building is that times have changed. The Government — probably thought cutting lone parents' benefits would bring a cheer from the drumbeaters of the right — as it would have done during the glory years of Thatcherism. And yet the Mail group were paralysed by ambivalence on that question. In the era of the single woman — from Princess Diana to Bridget Jones — the Mail newspapers knew that lone mums could no longer be demonised. An easy target of the 80s had become demographically sensitive in the 90s.

LABOUR risks appealing a British right that is fading away. Tony Blair keeps his distance from the unions — even though opinion polls show young voters, rooted in the future not the past, are eager to give them a key role in running the economy. While he proceeds cautiously on constitutional reform, the ultra-Conservative Centre for Policy Studies calls for total devolution — with Westminster reduced to a federal parliament responsible for foreign policy and defence. The Adam Smith Institute suggests the abolition of QCs and the Sunday Times calls for the mothballing of the office of the Lord Chancellor.

Tony Blair's historic achievement was to construct a new, winning coalition. Now that's done, he can afford to stop pandering to its decade-old prejudices. Armed with a 179-seat majority and sky-high poll ratings, he can start changing minds and dispelling old myths. He built this coalition — now he can lead it.

Speak to us, Jack

Polly Toynbee

ODD how social concerns wax and wane in fashion. Why, for instance, is all so strangely quiet inside the prisons. How can this be? They are full to bursting. Week after week the numbers rise faster, still accelerating. Last week saw the biggest increase ever.

This week yet another new prison opened for another 500 inmates, but that will house a mere nine days worth of prison population growth, at this alarming rate. Last week the prisons got a £70 million emergency bung from the Treasury, on top of the extra £43 million last July. This money will provide 3,520 extra places — or some four months of growth, when, presumably they will need another bung and another another. The prisons budget is a gaping, insatiable mouth to feed, gobbling up all the money that should be better spent on keeping people out of jail.

But why isn't there more noise from within the prison walls? Talking to prison governors, a decent progressive breed, first they express their sheer relief at freedom from Michael Howard's icy grip. He intimidated and bullied them and they despaired of his cheap tricks to gain tabloid headlines by being tough on prisoners, outraged at his crowd-pleasing inflation of prison numbers.

BUT more than that, they like and trust Jack Straw. They believe he genuinely wants to divert sentencing away from prison, catching and treating young offenders early. They like his plans for young offender teams to make community sentences work, so courts trust and use them. They hope his plan for intensive drug treatment programmes in the community will encourage courts to sentence addicts to treatment, not to jail. They are optimistic that electronic tagging will mean 3,000 fewer prisoners. Straw speaks their language.

Nonetheless there is deep alarm at the ever rising prison numbers. Richard Tilt, prison service director general, predicts a prison population reaching 70,000 next year, needing 24 new prisons at a cost of £2 billion. He says of course he can go on dealing with any number of prisoners, as long as the money arrives with them. But he knows it won't, or not enough. "The basic fact remains we are underfunded to provide full constructive programmes for prisoners." Too many are locked up too long with no chance of effective treatment.

So, bidding in the Comprehensive Spending Review, Tilt offers evidence proving the effectiveness of education, work, drug treatment and intensive group therapy in prison. He says the current re-offending rate of 50 per cent

of prisoners could be reduced to 30 per cent, if he had the money for good treatment programmes. Since each prisoner costs £600 a week, stopping 20 per cent coming back through the revolving door of recidivism makes financial sense. But he doesn't think he will ever get the money for these programmes for as long as the numbers keep rising so fast.

Nor does he think enough will be put into community programmes while prisons swallow so much.

How can prison numbers be cut? By doing the one thing Jack Straw refuses to do — setting out to change public opinion and the courts' sentencing policy. Douglas Hurd sharply reduced the prison population, not just by letting many petty offenders out. More important, he said loudly and often that prison does not work. He reduced the demand for longer prison sentences among the public and among the judges. He changed the courts' attitudes and there was no public outcry. Where Hurd lead, the people followed. That's what politicians are supposed to do.

FLACINATING recent research shows the public's ignorance of sentencing tariffs. They think sentencing is far laxer than it is. While that doesn't show a public thirst for leniency, it does show how misled people are by the last government's rhetoric and a blood-thirsty tabloid press. Judges claim their independence of politics, yet the courts are astonishingly responsive to public and political mood. When they get a stronger steer from government, they obey. So from the day Howard trumpeted "Prison works!" the sentencing graph took off vertically.

The lesson for Jack Straw is that he cannot, in his field, do good by stealth. He has to get brave and say out loud what he says to the professionals within the system — that prison does not work for many. He has said he wants sentences that are proven to be effective — but he doesn't spell out what that means. Where the evidence shows how badly prison scores for many offenders, he has to start saying so publicly, loud and clear. He has to remind people that what they really want is less crime and less reoffending for the huge amount of their taxes spent on it. Straw needs to spell out the facts about the limited value of prison and the evidence on more effective treatments all that wasted money could buy. With the figures to prove it.

He must say prison does not work

he could change public attitudes more easily than he fears.

But like so many ministers in this government, psychologically he is still in opposition, still looking the last election, still terrified of some imaginary backlash. But the foe is vanquished, and the Labour Government is really popular. All they have to do is to lead honestly in the direction their instinct and intellect tells them, and public opinion will stay with them.

Martin Woollacott sees no happy ending to the US-Iraq confrontation

Only disasters loom

THE difference between the Gulf crisis of 1990 and that of 1998 is that seven years ago we were negotiating with Iraq, while this time the bizarre fact is that we are mainly negotiating with each other. In 1990 the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and various Arab countries also traded back and forth a variety of formulas for avoiding war, but there was no serious disagreement on what Iraq had to do, which was to withdraw from Kuwait. Disagreements only arose over timing and over what sweeteners, mainly promises of action on the Arab-Israeli conflict, might be offered to Saddam.

The crisis then was between Iraq and the international community. The crisis now is within the international community, between the US and many of the world's principal

states. It is almost as if the US threat to bomb has been aimed at its allies and partners rather than Iraq — as if to say, this what we have to do, because you have let us down over Iraq — and that bringing them into line is as important as bringing Iraq to heel.

What has been at stake in the UN discussions over a mission by Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, to Baghdad, goes far beyond Iraq. Failure to agree on a common proposal would amount to the most serious split in the international community since the cold war ended. Success, on the other hand, produces a fragile package which, since it will have been negotiated down to the last comma in New York, cannot be unravelled in Baghdad. If the Iraqis did manage to change one jot or tittle, the likely consequence is that the Americans

would reject the deal, and the international rift would widen again just as America and Britain began their military campaign.

American diplomatic activity in the past few weeks has not been about recreating the armed coalition of 1991 but about trying to limit a profound disagreement over how the Middle East should be managed. That is, this disagreement is not, at bottom, about whether to attack Iraq, or about Saddam's possession of weapons of mass destruction, terribly important though that is. It is about American primacy in the Middle East, the uses to which it is hoped will make them turn on Saddam. It is said that the key question is Iraqi compliance with the UN inspection teams, and that is undoubtedly critical, but more critical is whether it is to be Iraq or

would include Saddam's mass destruction capacity. But it is almost certain that any place where mass destruction agents are known to be stored will be off, not on, the target list, because of the danger of dispersing them. Instead, the most likely aim is to hurt the

Saddam is unlikely to be disciplined

Iraqi armed forces in a way it is hoped will make them turn on Saddam. It is said that the key question is Iraqi compliance with the UN inspection teams, and that is undoubtedly critical, but more critical is whether it is to be Iraq or

the United States which, on balance, loses most because of the way the confrontation is ended. That confrontation is also constantly talked about as susceptible to a "solution", preferably diplomatic. Yet neither a military operation nor a diplomatic agreement, unless the former does topple Saddam, will bring a "solution". For a start, Saddam is unlikely to be effectively disciplined either by a diplomatic deal, which he would at once start to subvert, or by military punishment, which he would probably endure for quite a time, leaving the United States with the dilemma of how long to continue bombing. Military action might eventually lead to a diplomatic settlement which, again, Saddam would undermine. Subversion of a deal would lead back to military action. How long this might see-saw on is anybody's

guess. The larger crisis arises from the fact that the huge capital of influence which America possessed after the Gulf War victory has been dissipated. By now there might have been a better regime in Iraq, a new deal for the Kurds, a Palestinian state on the brink of emergence, democratic changes in the Gulf states, peace agreements between Israel and Syria and Lebanon, and regional economic co-operation softening the hostilities that even in such a best case would remain.

WHETHER all this could have been achieved is questionable, but it is true that America has lacked determination and Israel has been profoundly obstructive. What Russia and France can properly ask is what has

happened to that plan for regional settlement, and in what way bombing contributes to its renewal. What they can be properly asked is what their plan is, and whether concessions to Saddam — and there have to be some, if diplomacy is to prevail — will make it more or less possible to deal with the region's problems. The tense debate between the powers over Iraq is a debate between two negatives. Both camps point to the deficiencies of the other's policies, neither offer anything positive. The risks of either course are obvious. But, after the present crisis is brought to an end, it is the much greater risk of lapsing into a period of even greater division and incoherent policy making in the Middle East, and precisely the opposite is so desperately required, that should concern us most.

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to the Editor
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Laying bare the masons

Why not add the MPs?

IT WILL BE the 200th anniversary next year of the time when the Freemasons used their well-placed political muscle to win exemption from the 1793 Unlawful Societies Act. Enquiries yesterday to Freemasons Hall in London, seeking reaction to Jack Straw's plans to out the masons now working in the criminal justice system, were met again with the traditional no comment.

The Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodges, Commander Michael Higham (RN to the Commons Home Affairs Select Committee on the involvement of Freemasonry in the now disbanded West Midlands Serious Crime Squad and the Stalker Affair, Chris Mullin, Chairman of the committee, already complains about a lack of co-operation on that issue. Transparency, despite some recent efforts, does not seem to come easy to the world's largest "secret" charitable society.

It has been a long time coming. It is now 15 years since the Metropolitan Police Commissioner warned police officers of the dangers of joining the masons. He cited their masonic oaths as implying loyalties which could supersede those of the law as his reason. The Home Secretary yesterday finally put on record the real concern behind that decision — to belong to the Freemasons had shockingly become the principal way of getting promoted.

Most rank and file masons do nothing more harmful than risk catching a cold by

barring their chests or rolling up their trouser legs in a draughty hall. But as the Association of Chief Police Officers repeated yesterday, it is important to reassure the public that membership of the Brotherhood does not lead to abuse. Amongst the judges the question of masonic influence is even harder to unravel partly because of the "secret soundings" which surround their appointment. Lord Justice Millett tried to defend masonic secrecy yesterday by claiming it was no different from belonging to a golf club. Well, few golf clubs have a "mutual aid" clause in their secret loyalty oath. Ask the Association of Women Barristers if they think membership of a secret male-only society increases their public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Mr Straw gives the United Grand Lodges one last chance. New recruits will have to register, but he is going to ask them to hand over the names of all existing members in the criminal justice system. If they don't or can't co-operate — and there is talk that their national computer database doesn't include occupations — then the Government will set up its own register and invite all 250,000 people involved in the system to state whether or not they are a mason or be listed as a "won't say". Journalists will be able to highlight those police forces with a high refusal rate. If that fails (and the definition of failure is a bit vague here) then Mr Straw says he will bring in legislation to make registration compulsory — and he won't wait until the next general election to do it. This is a good way to go as long as the timetable doesn't slip. There is no need for patience on this one.

This is also a deserved victory for Mr Straw in his continuing battle with Lord Irvine, who has fought for the past year to protect the senior judges from such prying questions. If they feel they are being got at

why not add the lawmakers themselves — MPs and ministers — to the disclosure list? That way we will be able to say next time exactly who is behind the lobby for exemptions from the next Unlawful Societies Act.

Free at last . . .

But now read the fine print

The ways of politics are sometimes strange. Lord Irvine offers up his thoughts on the Human Rights Bill and implications for press freedom and is duly trampled to death by most newspapers (not to mention some colleagues). Some ten days later Jack Straw offers up his thoughts on the same subject and is greeted with the popping of champagne corks from Kensington to Canary Wharf. There will, after all, be no privacy law by the front door, back door or garden gate. The press is gloriously free once more.

But take away Lord Irvine's impromptu remarks about the role the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) might have in preventing breaches of privacy and it is not entirely clear how the world has changed so dramatically. What we have been offered so far is the assurance that the Government will draw up an amendment to the Human Rights Bill to stress the importance of a free press. First, it should be "virtually" impossible to get an *ex parte* injunction to prevent a breach of privacy. This is right and proper, though it says nothing about injunctions where a newspaper is represented at a hearing. Second, it will include an explicit provision that Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (which guarantees the right to freedom of expression) should be treated "with particular regard". This is also right and proper. Third, the proposed amendment states that any court

dealing with privacy matters must take into account the extent of the public interest in publication; whether the newspaper has acted "fairly and reasonably" and whether the story meets the provisions of the PCC's Code of Practice. This leaves the PCC's status unresolved. More worryingly, it also introduces a new test: who is to say what is fair and reasonable? If such vague words are left to the discretion of any High Court judge hauled out of bed on a Friday night we should not hold our breath for the new golden age of press freedom.

But what is all this talk of court action, anyway? Has a privacy bill slipped in through the cat flap while Lord Wakeham was guarding the patio doors? The answer, of course, is yes. For all the self-congratulatory gloss, it now appears to have been conceded that the courts will be hearing actions for breach of privacy, whether intended or past. News organisations that only a week ago were protesting that they would never accept a privacy law have now rolled over. What gives them such confidence now?

Yesterday's tributes to the Straw proposals made them sound as if they had been drafted by Locke and Mill rather than cobbled together at a hurriedly-convened meeting of ministers at Heathrow Airport. There is the whiff of high politics and unsatisfactory compromise about it all, and MPs should be prepared to subject the eventual amendment to harsh scrutiny.

Must do war

Let me look at my diary

IT IS DARNED inconvenient making war these days when there is so much already on the calendar. Last week Japan gave the

Americans a blank cheque to hit Iraq — just so long as it doesn't interfere with the Winter Olympics. US officials admitted that the Games were "a factor in their thinking." Now Washington is worried about the hajj to Mecca. With Saudi Arabia and all the other Arab nations except Kuwait already so lukewarm, it would be best to get military operations over before late March when pilgrims from every Muslim country begin to move. Nearer home, war can hardly start on Mothering Sunday (March 22), and TV images of destruction would not look too good later among the Easter bunnies in April.

That leaves about a month in between. But the US press is now scrutinising the presidential diary for other events which might narrow the timing. Bill Clinton has to be in Washington to make solemn speeches from the Oval Office to his fellow-Americans. So even a trip out of town for "parents' weekend" at the end of next week becomes relevant.

Perhaps it is time for the peace lobby to insert its own objections, relying on the excellent Housemans Peace Diary which has been produced in London for the last 45 years. We have just passed, as it happens, yesterday's 40th anniversary of that famous Central Hall meeting which launched CND. Other dates are more to the point in a Middle East context. March 27 is an awkward one: ten years ago Mordechai Vanunu was jailed for disclosing the nuclear weapons programme of Israel — the country to whose weapons of mass destruction no objection is made. March 16 would be even more embarrassing. That was the day in 1988 when Saddam Hussein massacred the Kurds with chemical weapons at Halabja — and Western governments who were busy selling him useful bits and bobs for his arms programme pretended not to notice.

Letters to the Editor

A pint (or two or three) of bitter

ANTHONY Burbage's claim that "the award-winning design of the Broad and Roses reflects the modern and contemporary relevance of the labour movement" (Letters, February 17) is the kind of nonsense we constantly hear from Tony Blair and the Islington set. When I visited it, I thought I had entered an ice cream parlour by mistake.

The furniture is of a type yuppies delight in, but which no respectable worker would allow near his/her home. I agree with the principles behind the pub, but I wish that at the design stage real workers had been consulted and not trendy lefties. Noel Hannan, London.

I AM a little surprised at Harold Pinter (Writer outraged, February 17). A gauche country lad I may be, and I certainly don't move in the playwright's enlightened norfolk London circles, but could he please offer me a more gender-friendly version of "chuffed to the bollocks" so that my (female) partner may feel included in his socialist delight at a New Labour victory last May? Stephen Potter, University of Sussex.

IN the 1970s when I was working as an anaesthetic technician for the heart-lung surgical team in a London teaching hospital, the team's regular consultant anaesthetist was equipped with a hospital beep so that he could be summoned to theatre as and when necessary (Patients claim they woke during surgery, February 17).

It was always a standing joke that he was out doing his Christmas shopping. The jokes stopped for a while when one patient woke up in the intensive care unit and asked if Dr X's beep really did work in Harrods. Peter Milton, London.

ROZ Southey (Letters, February 17) is also wrong in pinpointing the day for Ghost Hunters off Deal. Neither February 13 nor February 24 1998 is the anniversary of February 13 1748. It actually falls on February 26 because Parliament took 13 days and a further day in both 1800 and 1900. I'm not sure if it's happening in 2000, though. Has someone reminded Pete and Tony? Callum Brown, Doune, Perthshire.

EMMA Forrest accuses Shaznay of gender betrayal because she produced a number one and a few tears at the Brits because she was dumped (If this is woman power, I'm a girl, February 16). Crying shows emotion — something men are rarely prepared to do, but feminism shouldn't be about imitating them. That would be gender betrayal. Miranda Hall (aged 14), Benfleet, Essex.

Please supply a full address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear.

The slapper in the angel's wings

YOUR description of the Gateshead Angel as a "New Friend in the North" (February 17) is appropriate when one considers the storyline of the original Our Friends in the North series. Since the inception of the Angel, local polls have shown 85 to 95 per cent against the development — an opinion echoed in the impotent opposition on Gateshead Council. Opposition was not to a statue *per se* but to a hideous rusting monstrosity that has no relevance to the culture or history of the area. Gateshead council has allowed itself to be convinced that this modern emperor's new clothes is valid because it is "art".

Similar statues were last seen as fascist symbols in Nazi Germany — a fact doubtless not lost on Gateshead's huge Jewish community. The link to a totalitarian regime is, however, appropriate. The Angel will surely serve a purpose in replacing the legacies of the Poulson era as a monument to the north-eastern political classes' arrogance and alienation from the public. G H Giffing, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham.

YOUR report notes that the Angel "commemorates heavy human industry" and that it is an "impressive piece of structural design and engineering". Ironically, in an area that was famous for its heavy industry, such imaginative pieces of structural design

I HEARD IT WAS AN UNSUCCESSFUL PROTOTYPE OF A SECRET WEAPON FOR BOMBING BAGHDAD



and engineering — like the many ships built there — were never valued as art. And the ordinary working men who built these engineering marvels were not considered artists, just simple workmen who could be sacked at the whim of the owners. Robert Edward Burton, University of Exeter.

DIVINE intervention was not long arriving. In the Monday morning tailback, with thousands of commuters' attention being diverted by the Angel of the North, a colleague was shunted off the motorway on to the grassy embankment by a less than attentive lorry driver crashing into the rear of her car. His profuse apologies and offers to pay for her damage were frustrated by the fact that, despite the steam coming from the lorry's radiator, none could be found on my colleague's car. Paul Fallon, Newcastle upon Tyne.

I WAS amazed to learn of the gigantic Millennium Madonna and child. But not for the reasons one might expect. The concept of an adult and offspring surrounded by man's first learning tools (a rattle, building blocks, etc) is, in itself, quite apt as a celebration piece.

But it strikes me that the toys Peter Mandelson played with as a baby were not as intellectually stimulating as the taxpayers would hope of the man responsible for spending vast sums of their money.

If he were to study the label on the underside of the car which the Madonna baby clutches in his hand, he would read: "This toy is not suitable for children under three years. Contains small parts." Not to mention the metallic paint finish. They should have taken that car away from baby Peter as soon as he put it in his mouth. Suzie Tall, London.

LYING on her back on the M1, the "Slapper of the South" will have a good view of the Angel (which resembles nothing so much as a second world war aeroplane standing on its tail-fins). It is truly worth the obstruction of the first decent view over the Durham Dales from the urban fringe. Paul Younger, Birtley, Gateshead.

Against Fascism, signing the historic book "Viva Espana", Bill Alexander, Secretary, International Brigade Association, London.

I AM sceptical whether all the talk of "what can be done about the poor" (Paid as you earn, February 16) will ever translate into much more than talk. As for Polly Toynbee, for many of us words have a hollow ring, since women like her have come to represent the enemy. The only way professional women can "have it all" is by employing an army of other women as cleaners, nannies, childminders, typists and so forth, with no training, no career prospects, no pensions and wages that are kept artificially low.

THE promotion of Sian Kevill as skipper, may lead the ship to calmer, more reflective waters. Veteran editors remember her as quietly conscientious, friendly and professional. She may well be the ship's best hope. If she fires big gun Paxman at the right targets, she will be making good use of one of the country's most essential weapons in its democratic arsenal. Elissa Midgley, London.

Show Mellor the red card

DAVID Mellor's reluctance to comment "on any football issues, especially those involving Chelsea" (Chelsea fans face huge price hike, February 17) is in stark contrast to the attitude he regularly displays on Radio Five. Last Saturday Mellor repeatedly justified the sacking of Ruud Geffert on the grounds that by refusing to bend to Gullit's financial demands, Chelsea would be able to keep seat prices lower. Yet Chelsea supporters face up to 40 per cent increases in season ticket prices.

Recently 51 football club chairmen called for Mellor's resignation as chairman of the Government's Football Task Force, citing a conflict of interest with his radio role. Mellor claims to dictate to him what he said. The reality is he spouts Ken Bates's propaganda without prompting. Simon Banks, London.

LIKE Ron Coello (Letters, February 17), I am a season-ticket holder at Chelsea, a club I have supported for 27 years. My season ticket has gone up from £470 to £595, an increase of 26 per cent.

Is Ken Bates trying to stop ordinary working-class people from supporting the club? He obviously would prefer the type of supporter who buys his ticket for the Saturday, eats in the restaurant



with a bottle of Chelsea Chablis and then stays in Bates's motel afterwards, generating more money for his empire. Paul Mullaly, London.

On Gellhorn

IT IS 60 years since Martha Gellhorn and Ernest Hemingway came to the front at Teruel to visit the British Battalion of the International Brigade while Franco was trying to retake the town (War reporter Gellhorn dies at 89, February 17).

I was sitting with them on a log in the open, telling of the battle, when we came under shell fire and made a hasty retreat for cover to answer more questions. The incident was typical of Martha's courage and determination to get close to the reality of war.

After settling in Britain she followed and helped our association. Two months ago she made a lengthy visit to the exhibition of our archives. The People's War

Against Fascism, signing the historic book "Viva Espana", Bill Alexander, Secretary, International Brigade Association, London.

Affluence test

I AM sceptical whether all the talk of "what can be done about the poor" (Paid as you earn, February 16) will ever translate into much more than talk. As for Polly Toynbee, for many of us words have a hollow ring, since women like her have come to represent the enemy. The only way professional women can "have it all" is by employing an army of other women as cleaners, nannies, childminders, typists and so forth, with no training, no career prospects, no pensions and wages that are kept artificially low.

Newsnight hits calmer waters

AS ONE who has travelled the good ship Newsnight (third-class, standard picture editor) it is a mystery how the ship avoids mutiny night after night.

Under the stewardship of Tim Gardam, ratings and even senior officers, were generally too terrified of having to walk the intellectual gangplank of his derision, to venture a nose above deck. Under the last captain, Peter Horrocks, morale improved, but the lack of communication between decks

I may be unfair in this instance, but there are real obstacles to "galvanising people", not merely showing them into lousy jobs. Anyone discussing or concerned about poverty should look at themselves and ask in what way they might be contributing to the situation they claim to deplore. What can be done about the well off seems a more urgent question. Dr Sue Lord, Hull.

POLLY Toynbee can probably afford to forgive Labour's lone-parent benefit cuts, but the rest of us live with much starker realities. If it was a "bungled left-over Tory policy", what does that tell us about our new Government? It is the paradigm shift that the Government is enforcing that is unforgivable. J Carrick, East Sussex.

WE SENT troops to the Middle East to overthrow a dictator who was a new Hitler, a threat to the entire world, in 1956. It was the Suez war. It ended with the overthrow of the prime minister, who was replaced by his chancellor. It couldn't happen again, could it? David Ross, London.

THEINK that Bill Clinton should end all speculation about his alleged affair with Monica Lewinsky and let the weapon inspectors in now. If he refuses he should not be surprised at the consequences. T Campbell, London.

Lesser of evils in the Gulf

THE arguments about the Iraq crisis have generated an upsurge of appeasement, such as in the letter from Trinity College (February 17). But practically every objection to bombing Iraq is based on the assumption it will not achieve its ostensible purpose because it cannot be effective. This presupposes that the fear of causing civilian casualties will inhibit the full deployment of air power. Not so. If the bombardment is intrusive enough in duration and devastation, the Iraqi military may well decide to topple Saddam as the lesser evil.

Unless Iraq is compelled to surrender, the civilian casualties it could inflict with its deadly arsenal would be infinitely larger than those that may be caused by US missiles. Lionel Bloch, Richmond, Surrey.

TONY BLAIR may be right that there is a serious argument in favour of using force against Iraq. What he has not done is produce it. He does express an intent to "diminish Saddam's ability to deploy, conceal and recreate his weapons" by ensuring access of UN inspectors or "by destroying as much of his capability directly as we can". But he does not say how he expects military action to achieve this and does not mention the human cost of such action or the wider risks of possible escalation of the conflict.

Without an indication of the reduction in chemical weapons he expects to achieve, or an estimate of how many civilians would be killed, it is impossible to evaluate the proposed military action. Walter Buchanan, Edinburgh.

THIS month the US airforce has had a mid-air collision between two fighter planes over the Gulf, dropped some pretty nasty stuff on France and totalled a ski lift in Italy.

In 1991, unsmart targets hit with "smart bombs" included 26 civilian hospitals, 52 community centres, 676 schools, 56 mosques, the 900-year-old Church of St Thomas in Mosul and the Mustasariya School. Is this a power responsible enough to have weapons of mass destruction? Felicity Arbuthnot, London.

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A Country Diary

THE WREKIN: Drawn towards the far end of the woods for no particular reason other than there just might be one, I wandered the tangle of animal pathways until a reason found me. This weird flogging of woodland points south between fields, a strip regenerated after the upheavals of excavation in the last century which left pits and mounds like the aftermath of a bombing strike. Recognised by hawthorn, elder, ash, birch and oak, there's a strange mixture of scrub under wiry trees. Just as fall cutters have battered the hedges along the lanes, so furious storms have felled through this wood, cracking up old thorns, smashing down trunks leaving splintered trunks and white gaps. The noise began like muffled radio, a static and intensified into an insane twittering, an avian babble of what seemed like hundreds of invisible birds. Shadowy forms fitted through the upper branches as others were recruited into the vortex. But this rave of birds was very

aware. As I scrambled towards it there was a sudden rush — a thousand watching eyes in a crushing silence. Whatever was being communicated had nothing to do with this gnatcatcher, so I kept still, thought invisible thoughts, and the birds started up again. This was a gathering of the thrush clans — a mutation. Most were fieldfares, there may have been redwings, but there were mistle thrushes too. What were these thrushes up to? Were the fieldfares psyching themselves up for the journey north? Was this a parliament to thrash out the sexual politics of spring? Mistle thrush, or storm-cock, are said to be omens of bad weather — were they announcing or summing up? This inter-species flocking expressed forces of the cosmos, a state neither completely chaotic nor yet ordered. On some collective decision, the mutation flew into the field, where each individual bird fell silent, gazing gravely into the wind. PAUL EVANS

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Ernst Jünger

In step with the German century

THE death of Ernst Jünger at the great age of 102 ends both a legendary life packed with dramatic action, controversy and literary achievement, and a momentous era in German and European history. One of the last veterans and definitive chroniclers of the first world war, in which he served throughout as an officer on the Western Front, Jünger survived being wounded seven times to write his classic account of trench warfare *Storm of Steel* (1920), the first and most famous book in an astonishingly prolific lifetime of literary production. His writing was just one facet of an enormously wide range of activity, making him one of the 20th century's true Renaissance men: soldier, scholar, scientist, philosopher, political polemicist, diarist, correspondent, tireless traveller and dabbler in hallucinogenic drugs. Jünger was all these and much more.

Born into a large middle-class family, Jünger tired early of the stifling restrictions of life in the dying days of the Wilhelmine Empire. His teenage revolt led him first to join the Wandervogel youth movement, and then to enlist in the French Foreign Legion, an episode entertainingly recalled in his book *African Diversions*. Brought back from the front by an anxious father, he was just in time to join the army at the outbreak of war in 1914. Jünger's heroic combat experiences in the trenches won him Germany's top decorations, the Iron Cross and the Pour le Mérite medal, the coveted "Blue Max".

It also led him to formulate a theory of total war as the natural element of modern man. The ideas expressed in his war books of the early 1920s were the antithesis of the pacifism implied in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Jünger gloried in the shot and shell, the muck and ruck of comradesly combat, positively praising the war for tearing down the bourgeois complacencies of the previous century. An ardent nationalist, who despised the democracy of the Weimar Republic, Jünger

nonetheless fought shy of the rising National Socialist movement, rejecting an invitation to become a Nazi MP in 1927. He preached a revolutionary/revolutionary creed, uniting nationalism and Bolshevism to realise his ideal of a society run by worker-soldier technocrats.

Quitting the army in 1923, Jünger studied zoology in Leipzig and Naples, and began a lifetime habit of journeys to far-flung corners of the world. Until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 his base was Berlin, where his friends and contacts typically ranged from Dr Josef Goebbels on the right to Bertolt Brecht on the left. He refused to join other intellectuals in exile after the Nazi takeover, telling a friend with icy disdain: "I have chosen a high place from where I can watch people devour each other like bugs". This attitude of cold, aristocratic de-

achment was reflected in his last, and most daring, published work in 1939 and subsequently banned by Goebbels after it had become a bestseller.

Jünger rejoined the army on the outbreak of the second world war, which he mainly spent as a staff officer in occupied Paris, his duties leaving him time to cultivate cultural luminaries like Cocteau, Céline, Braque and Picasso, and still publishing as he turned 100, memories of his distant youth like *Die Zeltziele* (The Stingshows). His faithful publisher, Klett-Cotta, continued to issue his annual diaries, with Jünger's almost daily reflections on history, his travels, his bug-hunting expeditions, and his encounters with the pilgrims who beat such a steady path to his door.

Jünger sharply divided critical opinion on his place in the literary pantheon: left-

wingers never forgave him his early militarism and reputation as one of the chief gravediggers of Weimar democracy, but he always kept lines open to the left, and had friends like the playwrights Rolf Hochhuth and Heiner Müller, and the Mayor of Venice, a former communist. In

Britain, the cultural critic George Steiner berated Jünger as a dandy and aesthete, icily immune to the suffering of ordinary people, while men of the left like J.P. Stern and Stuart Hood, his translator, rated him in the late 1940s as probably the most important writer working in Germany. Latterly, his ecological concerns won him the grudging respect of Germany's radical Greens. Even his fiercest enemies could not deny the old warrior the qualities of courage and endurance.

A curious mixture of decadence and military precision, Jünger's world-view spans the romantic influence of the Nietzschean iconoclasm which dominated his youth, and the mechanistic world of computer culture which he saw foreshadowed in the destructive military technology whose interest in plants and insects exceeded his concern for individual people. Jünger lived long enough to see his country torn apart and put together once again.

In old age he enjoyed his growing cult status which he probably considered his due. Whether it will grow posthumously remains to be seen. "I have walked with death too long for it to hold any fear," Jünger told me in 1983. "Nor do I worry about the end of the world. When I die the world will end for me anyway."



Jünger... writing was just one facet of an enormously wide range of activity. FRANK MACHLER

But, true to his wild youth, Jünger resisted easy absorption by the establishment. His flair for stirring up controversy was shown again with the publication of his "drug diaries", detailing his many trips and experiments with LSD, mescaline and psilocybin. His post-war novels included prophetic dystopias on the place of man in a world increasingly dominated by technology, like *Heliopolis*, *The Glass Bees* and *Eumeswil*, and still publishing as he turned 100, memories of his distant youth like *Die Zeltziele* (The Stingshows). His faithful publisher, Klett-Cotta, continued to issue his annual diaries, with Jünger's almost daily reflections on history, his travels, his bug-hunting expeditions, and his encounters with the pilgrims who beat such a steady path to his door.

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Ernst Jünger was twice married. He had two sons, Ernst and Alexander, by his first wife Gretha von Jeinsen. Both pre-deceased him.

counts of what, with a typical reference to Goya, he called *caprichos* — a code-word for Nazi atrocities. He could only imagine, he said, that someone powerful had kept a protecting hand over him.

Jünger's merits as a writer rest on his style, which has at its best a frightening precision. (He detested the prose style of Thomas Mann.) His worst it becomes precious, indulgent, over-ripe. He found rich material in Paris under the Occupation. *Strahlungen*, his remarkable diary of the period, give a brilliant detached account of the Occupation, of the intellectual milieu of the collaborationist intelligentsia and of his own ambiguous situation as a Francophile member of the Wehrmacht.

Jünger was a great collector. His study was full of beautiful objects — stones, even his fiercest enemies could not deny the old warrior the qualities of courage and endurance

the skeleton of a snake, flowers, rare prints and books. In his writings he was also a collector of human beings and incidents — all described with an eerie coolness: a Russian collaborator whom too much killing had ravaged like too much sex, the execution of a young German deserter, the British bombing of Paris, a visit to Picasso's atelier.

There was about him — in his bearing, in his fastidiousness — a certain dandyism. It is the hallmark of much of his prolific output of essays, novels, diaries. Perhaps the final judgment on him as a writer and a political figure must be that style is not a sufficient moral basis on which to erect a critique of tyranny.

Professor Sir Harry Hinsley

The secret that helped to win the war

HARRY Hinsley, who has died aged 78, leaves a reputation: not only as a well-known historian and a distinguished academic administrator but as a man whose life was entwined with one of the great secrets of the second world war. The secret was Ultra intelligence, derived from the breaking of the German codes, especially those using the Enigma machines.

As an undergraduate at Cambridge, Hinsley had been snatched from his studies to work at Bletchley Park, decoding the cryptic information. Having kept the secret during the war, and for long after, he was later authorised to disclose it as the official historian of British intelligence, on which he worked into his retirement. On his hospital bed, only a couple of weeks ago, he noted wryly that the scammer, which was to help diagnose his lung cancer, was called Ultra.

Francis Harry Hinsley was born in Walsall. His father worked in the coal department of the local Co-op; his mother was later a school caretaker. Hinsley's was the classic tale of a scholarship boy, going on to elite secondary school to Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall, and winning an open exhibition at St John's College, Cambridge at the age of 17. This robustly maverick college was a good match for Hinsley, and he was a good catch for the college. Here was the making of his lifelong connection with it — for two

years an undergraduate, for 35 post-war years as a fellow, for 10 years as master of St John's and finally as a retired fellow until his death.

It was the second world war that introduced the only discontinuity. Unsurprisingly, Hinsley had got a First in part one of the Historical Tripos in 1939. Characteristically, he went on holiday to Germany that summer, often hitchhiking to make his limited funds stretch further. He later liked to tell the story of how,

on the steep road out of Berchtesgaden, he got a lift in the sleek Hitler's car, which was going up to meet the Führer, and of how Hitler brushed past the travel-stained student standing to watch his departure. As though savouring the last dregs of summer in pre-war Europe, Hinsley delayed his return home until the last moment.

Back in Cambridge, he was one of the youngest and brightest of the bright young

recruits who were discreetly enlisted in the Foreign Office's codebreaking HQ at Bletchley Park. It was here that Enigma was broken, in an environment later dramatised in Robert Harris's best-selling novel *Enigma* for which the author acknowledged Hinsley's assistance. Bletchley's style — a transplanted Oxbridge common room subsisting uncomfortably in a converted country house — evidently suited Hinsley's genially spartan habits. The work he did there was quickly recognised for its piercing insights into German strategic thinking.

It was obviously unusual, as many people observed at the time, for such trust to be reposed in someone who had never even completed his degree. What was to make Hinsley's career unique was his opportunity, half a lifetime later, to assess the importance of what Bletchley achieved, with special security clearance for research on the relevant records.

His own view, soberly argued and cogently documented, was that Ultra intelligence shortened the war by one or two years. He knew from personal experience how important it was to penetrate the Germans' secrets but to keep from them any evidence that the security of Enigma had been compromised.

The culture of secrecy inculcated at Bletchley persisted long after the war. Not until the 1970s, when parts of the story had already begun to seep out, was Hinsley com-

missioned to supply a full account. He did so in five massive volumes, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, published between 1979 and 1990, which are his monument as an historian, making sense of a secret history which he had himself helped to make.

Bletchley was thus the pivot of his life. It was here that Harry had met Hilary Brett, herself an Oxford graduate, whom he married in 1946. They were to have three children and to create a happy family home in post-war Cambridge, one of the returned to St John's, jumping at a stroke into a fellowship. In 1949, he was appointed to a university lectureship and was soon in the midst of a busy career as a don. In many ways, he looked the part of an inveterate pipe-smoker, an intrepid cyclist, a witty and sociable man, able to communicate his own enthusiasm to the duller undergraduates. His rasping, sub-Churchman cadences were affectionately imitated by his pupils, just as his transparently machiavellian strategies were indulgently appreciated by his colleagues.

Hinsley's own research, not surprisingly, had been a casualty of his war service. He published interesting essays on aspects of international relations and grand strategy. But not until his remarkable book, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (1963), did he produce a work that did justice to his range of interests, both in the practical exercise of power and in the way that this has

been theorised historically. Hinsley was promoted in 1965 to a readership, and in 1969 to a professorship, both of them personal appointments in the history of international relations, a field which he did much to foster in Cambridge. He was research supervisor for a prodigious number of PhD students.

A prominent figure in his own college, he emerged as an obvious internal candidate for the mastership, and was elected as such in 1979. Whether he was really happy in the master's lodge was never easy to tell from his men, sometimes cheerful, always stoical, occasionally sardonic. He served his two-year stint as vice-chancellor in 1981-83, not much relishing the pomp of the office but discharging his university business efficiently. The University Press, too, owed him a debt for supporting a tough-minded strategy to turn around its finances. Academic honours came steadily in later years, especially once the value of his history of intelligence was recognised. He was elected a fellow of the British Academy in 1981 and was knighted in 1985.

In retirement, Hinsley remained active almost to the end. He was a keen sportsman, but with a mind, shrewd and playful by turns, that itself remained something of an enigma.

Peter Clarke

Francis Harry Hinsley, historian, born November 26, 1918; died February 16, 1998

one of those people who, given independent means, are firm-minded enough to run their lives rather than letting life run them."

For the remaining 40-odd years of his life, he dispensed tea, cake, strong drinks and invaluable advice to former students, many of whom became devoted friends. His silences were legendary. With his look of a benevolent Buddha, he often seemed to be contemplating an eternity beyond his mews house near Marble Arch. The silence would often end with Oliver moving in his chair and asking "Now is it true that...?" the prelude to an interesting piece of gossip.

Housebound for the last five years, he wrote regularly to Radio 3 to correct an-

nouncers' mispronunciations. He loathed the calculated chumminess of the announcers who replaced Patricia Hughes and Tony Scotland and their inability to pronounce foreign words correctly, though he was more amused than irritated by the manner in which Oliver, who came out with *On ballo in maccusa*.

He stayed alert though he was, alas, only semi-conscious when the man in the bed next to him in hospital informed Oliver's visitors that he, Reginald, had been the lover of both Ivor Novello and Noel Coward. How Oliver would have chuckled.

Paul Bailey
Oliver Reynolds, born May 2, 1908; died January 20, 1998

Birthdays

Rob Andrew, rugby footballer, 35; Michael Buerke, broadcaster, 52; James Bredin, television archivist, 74; Helen Gurley Brown, author and magazine editor, 76; Phyllis Calvert, actress, 88; José-Maria Canzian, golfer, 57; John Cooke, painter and lecturer on art, 71; Sinead Cusack, actress, 50; Huw Davies, rugby footballer, 39; Phillip DeFreitas, cricketer, 32; Len Deighton, novelist, 69; Milos Forman, film director, 68; Celia Garmen, comic actor, scriptwriter, 55; Tessa Hilton, deputy editor, the Express, 47; Russell Hunter, actor, 73; Colin Jackson, athlete, 31; Pru

Leith, restaurateur, cookery editor, 58; Yoko Ono Lennon, conceptual artist and singer, 65; Peter Luff, Conservative MP, 43; James MacGibbon, publisher, yachtsman, 86; Prof William McKane, Hebrew and oriental language scholar, 77; Tom Morrissey, American novelist, 87; Jack Palanca, actor, 78; Lord Swraj Paul, entrepreneur, chairman, Caparo Group, 67; Bobby Robson, former football manager, 65; Greta Scacchi, actress, 38; Cybill Shepherd, actress, 48; Ned Sherrin, broadcaster, 67; Richard Thomas, high commissioner to Jamaica, 59; John Travolta, actor, 44.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

ON FEBRUARY 10, Page 3, in an article on Gulf war syndrome and the discovery of the chemical weapon, Agent 15, in the Iraqi armoury, we wrongly reported that the Defence Secretary, George Robertson, said in the House of Commons that there might be a connection between the two. This was something which others inferred, and should not have been attributed to the Defence Secretary.

IN A REPORT headed, Top pay at crisis opera house, Page 6, February 16, we said, "The payments for 1996/97 include more than £100,000 to Jeremy Isaacs, the former general director, who left in September 1996." In fact, Sir Jeremy Isaacs's responsibilities at the Royal Opera House ended on December 31, 1996. The House paid out his contract to the end of September, 1997.

THE TOWN and Country Planning Association has asked us to say that it is incorrect to state that it "represents" local councils and developers, Page 2, G2, February 16. It says the Association does not represent anyone. It is a campaigning organisation supported by a membership of organisations and individuals, which includes councils and developers. It says it campaigns for a form of planning designed to produce environmentally sustainable settlements which meet the needs of the whole community and not those of a particular interest group.

ON PAGE 6, G2, February 10, Small talk with the Thunder Dragon, we referred to the British High Commission in

Kathmandu. Nepal does not have a High Commission. It has an Embassy.

A SIDEBAR headed Great firsts from the NE, Page 9, February 13, gave 1880 as the year of the public demonstration of electric lighting in Newcastle. It was 1879.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor, Ian Mayes, by telephone 0171 239 5559 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 9697. E-mail: readers@guardian.co.uk

Death Notices

BRINDON F. W. (Mrs. Y. Glyn) Langston Road, Carmarthen, suddenly on 12th February 1998, aged 82. Mrs. Brindon was devoted to her husband, David, and to her family. Burial at Carmarthen on 18th February 1998 at 11am. Donations to the British Lung Foundation c/o F. E. Farm, 35 High Street, Billerica.

BRINTON, Arthur, Thursday 12th February 1998, aged 75, always an avid and devoted reader, after an illness fought with courage and honour. Beloved husband of Joan, a devoted father of Margaret, David, Francis, and a grandfather of Rachel, Thomas, Rosie, Adam, Mary, Nia and Owen. Service of thanksgiving for his life followed by burial at Langston Road Church on Thursday 19th February at 11am. No flowers. Donations in his memory to BACUP, Cancer Information Service, or to the British Lung Foundation c/o F. E. Farm, 35 High Street, Billerica.

HARRIS, On Sunday 15th February 1998 at 77, outside Hospital, Fredericka Louise, aged 62, dearly loved wife of John Harris, a devoted mother of three, a grandmother of five. Burial at St. Mary's Church, London on Friday 20th February at 11am. Family will be held at 11am. Donations to the British Lung Foundation c/o F. E. Farm, 35 High Street, Billerica.

In Memoriam
BOLNICE, North Ave. 1915-1998. Remembered with love on your birthday.

Oliver Reynolds

Tea, sympathy and silences

OLIVER Reynolds, who has died aged 89, was taught at the Central School of Speech and Drama throughout the 1950s where his students included Vanessa Redgrave, Judi Dench and Jeremy Brett. He must have been the only teacher of acting at this time who never referred to Stanislavsky, although he was curious about The Method, which was then in vogue. Oliver, however, had a method of his own. He was a man of very few words — all of them con-

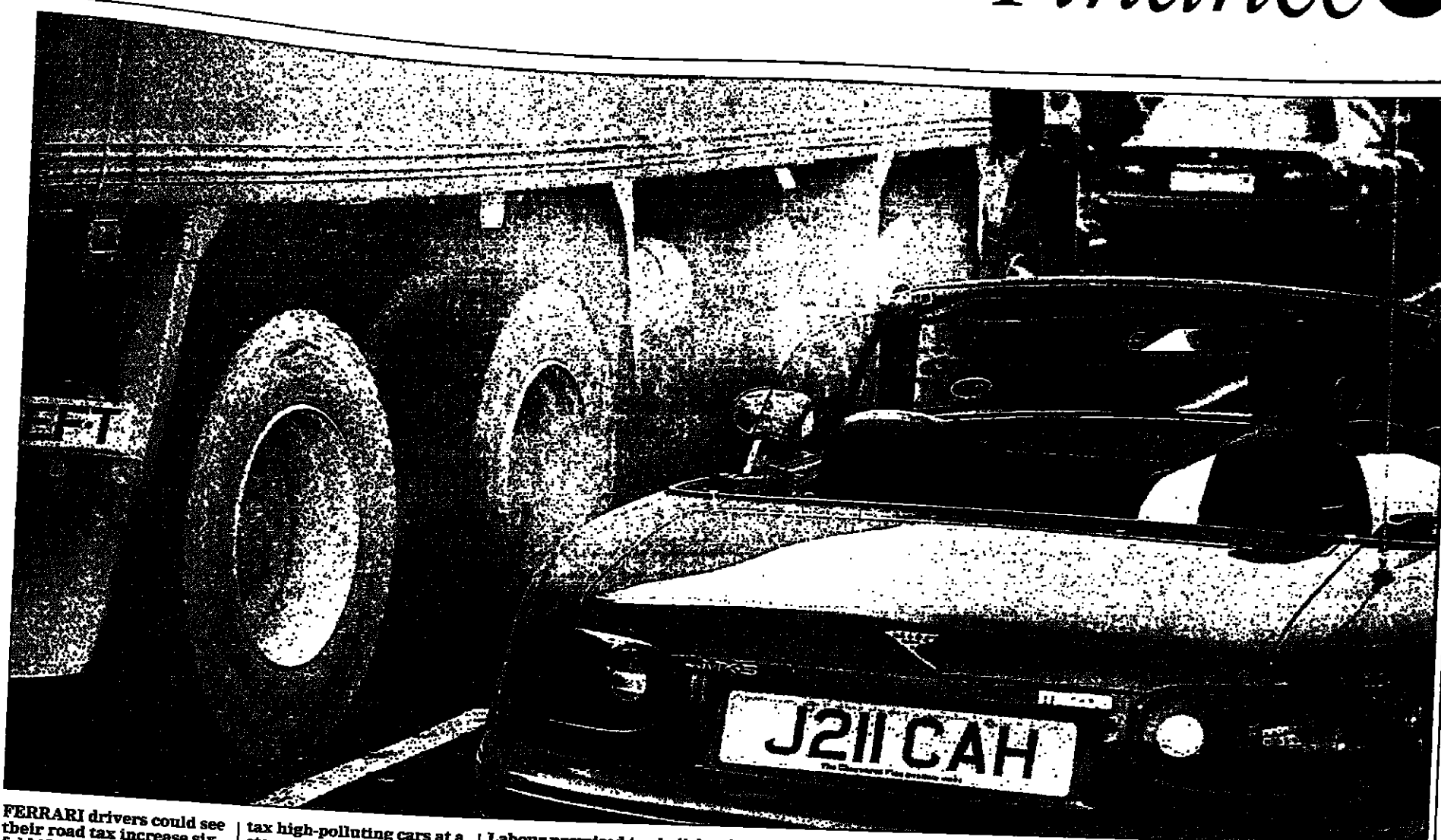
sidered: all of them apt. "That was good, was high praise. For the student who had performed adequately he gave a nod and when someone was bad he rebuked them with a single, withering sentence."

He was born in Bourne-mouth, the son of a successful architect. Mrs Reynolds was something of a *grande dame*, and always wore a hat while serving afternoon tea. In the late 1920s Oliver went up to Cambridge to study law, but switched to English, in which he achieved a First. At Cam-

bridge he became interested in the theatre, and in the next decade he was, by turns, a character dancer with the Ballet Rambert, an actor, a director and a set designer. He appeared in various plays at the Mercury Theatre, run by Marie Rambert's husband, Ashley Dukes. He played the Mesmerist in a touring production of Henry Irving's old warhorse, *The Belle*, and sang and danced in a West End revue with the innocent title *Let's Go Gay!*. In 1935 Oliver joined Michel

St Denis and George Devine at the newly formed Theatre Studio. When St Denis was ordered back to France to do military service at the start of the war, The Studio was disbanded. Oliver, unfit for active service, spent the war transcribing books into Braille for the blind. He went on to teach prospective RADA students, where he himself had trained, before joining the Central School. He retired relatively early. As the dramatist Ann Jellicoe observed: "He would seem to be

20/1/1950



FERRARI drivers could see their road tax increase sixfold if the Chancellor listens to the pleas for published today by Friends of the Earth, writes Roger Cove.

The environmental lobbyist says Britain should adopt policies common in mainland Europe, which tax high-polluting cars at a rate higher than those which are less damaging.

Charles Secrett, FoE's director, said yesterday: "Britain's flat-rate road tax is a gift to greedy gas-guzzlers. It's a rip-off of everyone who drives a small, sensible and fuel-efficient car."

Labour promised to abolish the crazy system when in opposition. The Chancellor must announce its end in the next Budget.

FoE compared tax rates in Belgium, Germany and Ireland for two of the most popular car models and those at either end of the fuel-efficiency range. The Ferrari F50 burns a gallon of petrol in 10.6 miles, compared with 51mpg for the Suzuki Swift. British owners of both cars pay £150 road tax.

In Belgium, the Ferrari owner would pay more than £1,000, while the tax would be almost £700 in Ireland and £190 in Germany, where the general level of road tax is lowest. The German tax for the Suzuki would be £40 a year.

Notebook

Taylor driven to new distractions



Edited by Alex Brummer

THERE was not much to be done about the results of the survey. The hit on BZW — together with tax changes, pensions mis-selling and a new general provision against the Asian loan book — a couple of small banks in the region — meant that before tax profits were down nearly £500 million, despite growth, most of it unexpected, in all main areas of activity, with business banking leading the way.

Mr Leschly wants to jeopardise all that with the costly, lengthy and risky Glaxo merger. The results strengthen the feeling that the answer has more to do with personal aggrandisement than commercial logic. SmithKline does not face the dilemma of having to replace a fast declining world-beater, as Glaxo did when it merged with Wellcome to offset the decline of Zantac. Nor is it a minnow that cannot afford the research.

Budget bonus

MOST governments would be salivating at the prospect of the improvement in the public finances seen under Labour. The combination of the July tax changes with spending rigour means that the outcome for the public sector borrowing requirement in the current year is going to be considerably better than the Treasury estimate as recently as last November.

Then the PSBR for 1997 was seen as £9.5 billion; following the surge in income tax receipts in January, it could come in at half of that. This presents a serious challenge to the Chancellor. The sight of the coffers full of cash, replenished as a result of a healthy economy and tax changes in July, will have spending ministers slapping their foreheads. In health and education, but the Minister and the Chancellor are determined not to allow the dyke to break: any extra cash will be in small, targeted gobs, in keeping with current public spending ceilings.

Break-up of ill-fated investment banking arm sees profits slump
Barclays counts cost of BZW

Pauline Springett

BARCLAYS BANK yesterday revealed a 26 per cent slump in pre-tax profits for 1997 as it took the full force of the costs associated with the break-up and sale of its ill-fated investment banking arm BZW.

Martin Taylor, Barclays chief executive, said the underlying performance of the on-going business was strong and stressed that the new-look bank, which has been reorganised into four divisions, was performing well.

He claimed that Barclays had not been too badly hit by the crisis in the Asian economy. But analysts had already pencilled in figures for the demise of BZW and were disappointed with the results nevertheless. Shares fell 118p to close at 1813p.

Barclays pre-tax profits for 1997 were still £1.7 billion — down from £2.3 billion in the previous year. Despite the BZW debacle, the bank has more assets than it can usefully employ at the moment and has decided to continue its recent policy of using the spare cash to buy back shares. It had planned to buy back £700 million of shares last year, but failed to repurchase more than £250 million because of the BZW

fiasco. It intends to repurchase 5500 million of shares during 1998. Much City interest centred on whether Mr Taylor would put flesh on the bones of the rumours surrounding a possible merger between Barclays and its rival National Westminster. He dampened this speculation, although he acknowledged that the banking sector was heading for mergers.

"I think the arguments for international banking consolidation over the next decade are absolutely compelling," said Mr Taylor. He expected big mergers between banks from different countries to be preceded by link-ups between domestic banks — but could not predict the timing. "Nor can I tell you who will end up holding hands with whom."

Last year's break-up and sale of most of BZW cost £468 million, which comprised a £340 million loss on the sale and restructuring of the investment bank, plus an associated goodwill write-off of £128 million. There was also a £219 million loss from BZW's actual operating activities.

Mr Taylor said the decision to axe BZW was already paying off because the new-look bank was operating in a more integrated manner and generating more business for the group as a whole. Provision for bad and doubtful debts rose by six per cent to £227 million. Barclays expects that to rise during this year.

What's good for shareholders may close your branch

Staff say customers are being given a raw deal, writes Pauline Springett

BARCLAYS may have produced disappointing results for 1997 but shareholders can look forward to an increased dividend payout — plus another share buy-back.

The dividend rose by 17 per cent to 37p. The share buy-back is intended to

total £500 million, although shareholders should be wary of counting their pennies just yet. Last year, Barclays only managed to achieve half of its intended £700 million buy-back target after its plans were derailed by the BZW debacle. Meanwhile, Barclays' staff are recovering from one of the longest disputes in banking history.

The row, which resulted in three one-day strikes by staff last year, was over a controversial performance-related pay scheme. The scheme followed several years of rocky staff relations at Barclays, which made thousands redundant during the early 1990s. Some 23,000 jobs have gone since 1990. The

bank now has around 61,000 employees. Job losses were mirrored by a reduction in the number of branches. Barclays now has 1,975, compared to 2,550 in 1991. A spokesman said that the banking face of Barclays was operating in a more integrated manner and generating more business for the group as a whole.

Provision for bad and doubtful debts rose by six per cent to £227 million. Barclays expects that to rise during this year. The bank also made a £45 million general provision for possible losses in Asia. Its total exposure to South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand was £1.2 billion. Barclays wants to buy back more shares — but said it was advised by current rules on advance corporation tax.

SKB puts case for merger

Roger Cowe

JAN LESCHLY, the SmithKline Beecham chief executive, yesterday described his plan for a £100 billion merger with Glaxo Wellcome as "a compelling strategic opportunity", despite announcing record profits in a year of "excellent progress on all fronts" as an independent company.

The cost of research and development was a key factor in wanting to create the world's largest drug company, Mr Leschly said. "One of the issues we are struggling with is how we can continually invest in research and development with all the new targets. We are not lacking new targets. The question is how many can we fund."

Pensions index shows majority of workers are heading for hardship

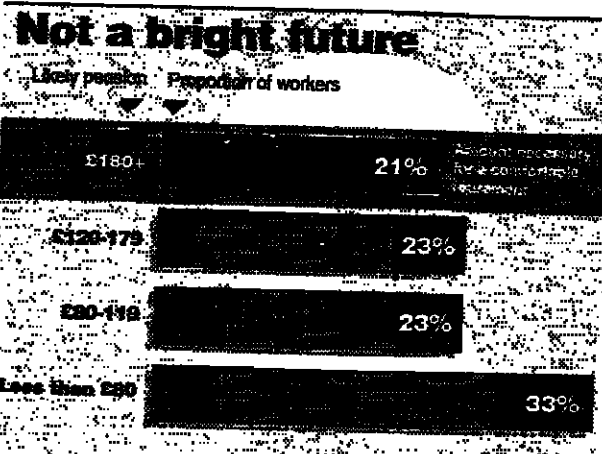
Rupert Jones

AT LEAST 12 million people — more than half of the work force — are heading for financial hardship when they retire, a new report warns. These people are on track to receive a pension of £106 a week or less, according to NatWest Life, which launched a "pensions index" yesterday.

The index assesses where the nation stands in terms of retirement provision, including state provision, company and personal schemes. It found that only 21 per cent of workers are set to achieve a pension of £179 a week — the minimum which older people today say is necessary for a comfortable retirement.

About eight million people are on course to draw a pension of less than £80 a week. Many of those worst off are believed to be women working part-time and other low earners who do not have access to a company pension scheme or earn so little that a private pension would not be worthwhile.

The bank said its research, which included interviews with more than 4,000 people and a variety of data and assumptions, was evidence that state benefits alone are not enough to meet the financial needs of retired people. Currently the maximum that someone on average earnings would receive from the state is £116 a week.



Beckett offers no favours

Mark Millner

Deputy Financial Editor

INDUSTRY was warned last night by Margaret Beckett not to expect special treatment, despite the problems the strong pound causes manufacturers.

Although many firms are struggling with a rapid 20 per cent appreciation in the value of sterling against key continental currencies, the Bank of England has to set interest rates with a view to the whole economy, according to the President of the Board of Trade.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS			
Australia 2.39	France 9.86	Italy 2.880	Singapore 2.87
Austria 20.37	Germany 2.8944	Japan 1.63	South Africa 7.87
Belgium 59.76	Greece 458.78	Netherlands 3.2516	Spain 244.25
Canada 2.30	Hong Kong 12.32	New Zealand 2.72	Sweden 18.02
Cyprus 0.85	India 53.64	Norway 12.10	Switzerland 2.32
Denmark 11.11	Ireland 1.6119	Portugal 206.49	Turkey 356.310
Finland 8.867	Israel 5.88	Saudi Arabia 8.04	USA 1.6022

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel)

12 FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

Record revenues and falling debt leave spending controls unchanged

Fat figures won't loosen stays

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

THE Government was last night sticking to its election pledge of tough control of public spending in next month's Budget, despite figures showing that soaring inland Revenue receipts left the Treasury with its biggest-ever monthly surplus in January.

Fearful of repeating the mistakes of the late 1980s and wary of the impact of an economic slowdown later this year and next, senior ministers were adamant yesterday that the £10 billion-plus debt repayment would not be the cue for a giveaway package on March 17.

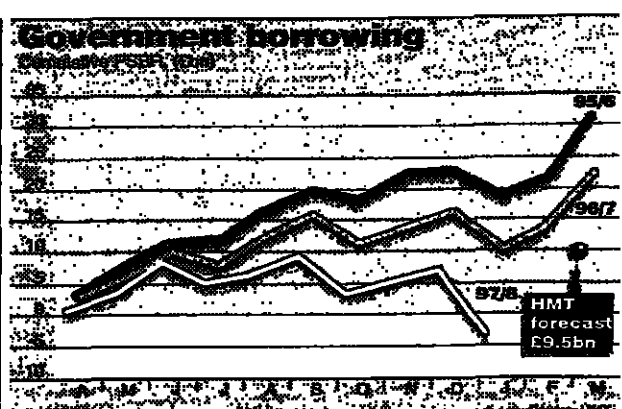
They insisted that there

would be no dilution of the election promise to stick to the spending totals inherited from the Conservative government for the first two years of the new parliament.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that the Government's income exceeded its spending by £10.382 billion in January, compared to a deficit of £1.502 billion during the previous month.

In the first 10 months of the 1997-8 financial year, there was a cumulative surplus — or public sector debt repayment — of £4.2 billion, a £14 billion improvement on the same period last year.

Some City analysts said that the Government was on course in the 1998-9 financial year for its first annual budgetary surplus for eight years,



and that the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, now had the chance to loosen the purse-strings without placing in jeopardy the long-term health

of the public finances. The Treasury said that it was determined to take a prudent approach to Britain's public finances, saying: "Continued

vigilance will be necessary if we are to ensure that the Government's five-year deficit reduction plan remains on course."

In a statement designed to play down expectations, the Treasury said that corporation tax and self-assessment collection boosted January's receipts as expected.

"But public borrowing is always difficult to predict towards the end of the financial year," it added.

In the final two months of the 1996-7 financial year, hefty spending by government departments resulted in borrowing of £12.1 billion.

If that performance were repeated in February and March this year, the final figure for the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement would be around £8 billion, compared to the £9.5 billion which was predicted by the Chancellor in November.

The PSBR peaked at about £45 billion in 1993-4, but a combination of higher taxes and spending controls has led to a steady decline in the past four years.

Jonathan Loynes, economist at HSBC, said the borrowing figures were excellent and added: "These numbers put the PSBR back on track to undershoot the official full-year forecast comfortably. Our forecast is for £6 billion, and an even lower number is possible."

The bad news is that the figures make it even harder to justify the consumer tax increases needed in the Budget to re-balance the economy and rescue industry from the strong pound.

No solace in sight for Saunders

Dan Atkinson

FRAUDSTERS convicted under the discredited "talk or else" evidence-gathering procedure will not be cleared under new legislation restoring the right to silence, the Government said last night.

The announcement dashes the hopes of Guinness convict Ernest Saunders and others, although they may still be able to use Labour's new miscarriage of justice unit to achieve not-guilty verdicts.

The news came with confirmation that consumer affairs minister Nigel Griffiths is planning legislation to speed up the process for disqualifying unfit persons from acting as company directors.

Mr Griffiths wants to be able to plea-bargain with directors facing orders banning them from boardrooms.

The Attorney General, John Morris, earlier this month responded to the 1996 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights that Mr Saunders' rights had been violated when evidence acquired under compulsory powers was used against him.

Mr Morris said such evidence could no longer be used in court — curtailing the powers of the Serious Fraud Office and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Last night, his office confirmed that legislation implementing this decision will not

be retrospective, despite comments last April by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, that it was unsatisfactory the English courts were unable to give effect to the European judgment.

Lord Bingham was ruling on an appeal involving two people convicted of Financial Services Act offences who had been questioned under "talk or else" powers.

Ian Morissey and Lorelei Staines cited a ruling by the late Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, that if Mr Saunders was victorious in Strasbourg, Britain's treaty obligations would force a rethink of previous cases involving compulsory evidence. Last night's statement would seem to reject that view.

Nevertheless, the Criminal Cases Review Commission, set up immediately after Labour's election victory, may still prove a route by which Mr Saunders and others can clear their names, according to a source close to Guinness defendants.

The Attorney General's office said no decision had been taken whether to present a single bill to Parliament prohibiting the use of "talk or else" evidence or whether the measures would be split up and attached to specific bills.

Meanwhile, Mr Griffiths has told Parliament he wants directors who admit their unfitness for office to be able to avoid court delays by agreeing a legally-binding ban.

Fired up for new push



Decision time for Lone Ranger as he ponders the fate of his last Rolo and (below) thought-provoking advert for Madame Tussaud's, both by WPP subsidiary J Walter Thompson

Digital puts viewers in frame for WPP

Tony May

WPP — the world's largest advertising agency — yesterday unveiled a 16 per cent rise in profits.

The company has Ogilvy & Mather and J Walter Thompson in its stable — yet its share of the fragmented £300 billion worldwide advertising and marketing services industry is still less than 3 per cent.

That gives it a lot still to go for, especially as the global market grew by 6 per cent last year.

During 1997 the group — which earns 80 per cent of its revenue outside the UK — was hit by the strong

pound, but still managed to push profits up to £177.4 million. That reflected a rise in net new billings of £100 million to \$2.1 billion.

Martin Sorrell, the chairman, believes the group can do still better as it takes advantage of changes in the industry.

Digital television — to be launched in the UK later this year — presents a big growth opportunity. "Digital broadcasting will enable our clients to get much more data on who's watching and what they are watching," Mr Sorrell said.

Advertisers are increasingly worried that while the cost of using television has been rising on both

sides of the Atlantic at a rate of 10 per cent a year, audiences have been declining.

So clients were keen to use the group's integrated expertise to experiment with radio, with outdoor billboards, with the Internet and with increasingly fragmented magazines and newspapers to see if they could get better results.

But the group is also lessening its reliance on advertising. Last year this accounted for 54 per cent of revenue and 64 per cent of profit, but other operations are growing faster.

Compared with a 9 per cent rise in advertising revenue in 1997, the information and consultancy busi-



ness grew by 16 per cent, public relations and public affairs by 14 per cent, and specialist communications by 12 per cent.

WPP as a whole pushed its operating margins up 1 per cent to 11.8 per cent last

year and Mr Sorrell wants the same this year.

If just the advertising, public relations and public affairs businesses in the group managed to match the "best practice" operating margins of their rele-

vant rivals, the group's current revenue levels would generate another £20 million of annual operating profits, he said.

Who says "bean counting" is nothing to do with advertising?

If the cause fits, customers will pay

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

ALMOST two in three people say they will pay more for a product if the purchase helps a good cause, according to a survey today of cause-related marketing.

The survey also finds strong scepticism about companies' motives for linking themselves with good causes. More than half feel they are "just cashing in".

Almost 1,500 people were asked by Mintel, the market research company, about their awareness of specific campaigns. The highest rec-

ognition factor was for Tesco's computers-for-schools initiative, of which 46 per cent were aware.

Second most recognised was the campaign linking Andrex toilet tissue and Guide Dogs for the Blind (38 per cent), while third was Lora margarine and the British Heart Foundation (33 per cent).

Camelot, operator of the National Lottery, emerged as the company most likely to be regarded positively for its contribution to good causes. Some 28 per cent identified it as a supporter of charity.

The BBC (16 per cent) came fourth — presumably by vir-

tue of its exhortation to give, rather than any donation of its own.

Of the survey sample, 17 per cent said they definitely would pay a little more for a product linked to a good cause and 45 per cent said probably. Only 11 per cent said definitely not.

Sixty per cent agreed that companies were cashing in on public sympathy by using cause-related marketing.

Ed Shelton, the report's author, said media-savvy consumers "recognise company motives for what they are".

Cause Related Marketing; Mintel, 18 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HE; £285.

Branson stirred by cola battle

Roger Cowe

THE spat over the market position of Virgin Cola intensified yesterday with claims from Richard Branson's empire that his drink's sales were being misrepresented.

Mr Branson wrote to the Financial Times complaining that it had used misleading data in an article to understate Virgin Cola's market share. He also suggested the paper was exhibiting short-termism in judging his brand's performance after only three years on the market.

The Virgin Group founder

was responding to news that its cola sales slumped in December to an all-time low, with only 2.3 per cent of the UK market.

Virgin said yesterday it had expected a dip in December because Pepsi launched a huge promotion, offering two cans for the price of one.

The company attacked a number of other claims which it described as "urban myths": Pepsi is an exciting brand; Virgin Cola sales had been falling in outlets which stocked the drink for all of last year; and "the fizz is leaving Virgin Cola".

It claimed that sales in Co-op stores had more than

doubled during 1997 and that growth of sales volumes was higher than for any other brand. But growth is bound to be easier for a small brand such as Virgin, which is expanding the number of outlets where it is available. And the company did not directly address the question of its market share.

According to research firm Taylor Nelson AGB, Virgin sold 4 per cent of all the cola drunk in Britain last year, measured by sales value and excluding sales in pubs and restaurants. Pepsi's share was 21 per cent while Coca-Cola still dominated the market with 59 per cent.

Talks on cross-border investment pact collapse

Charlotte Denry

TWO days of high-stakes negotiations over an international treaty to liberalise national rules on foreign investment collapsed last night.

Negotiators failed to agree on making a commitment for

the 29 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to push for a political agreement at a ministerial meeting in late April.

A source close to the talks on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which are being held at the OECD's Paris headquarters, described

the MAI as "dead in the water for now".

The MAI was promoted by the rich countries' think-tank, the OECD, as a way of encouraging and protecting more than £213 billion a year in cross-border investment, notably by obliging governments to treat foreign investors on the same terms as do-

mestic counterparts. It would have allowed multinationals to sue national governments which harmed their interests.

The OECD launched the project in mid-1995 and the latest meeting took place under mounting opposition from environmental, labour and other interest groups. But the real sticking point has

been the sweeping exemptions for particular industries, such as the French film sector, demanded by national governments. American enthusiasm has waned due to tensions over US trade sanctions legislation — judged by European partners to be at odds with the treaty.

Meanwhile, the business

groups which originally sponsored the treaty have lost interest as its provisions have been watered down.

Lobby groups which campaigned for the treaty to include environmental and labour protection measures were hopeful last night's failure could spell the end of the MAI.

News in brief

Suharto dismisses central bank chief

PRESIDENT Suharto of Indonesia yesterday sacked his central bank governor because of a disagreement over how to revitalise the country's paralysed economy. Soedradjat Djiwandono was known to be opposed to a plan to peg the rupiah to the US dollar through a currency board system. Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, has previously criticised the planned currency board. However, yesterday his official in Jakarta, Prabakar Narvekar, said after meeting Mr Suharto that the IMF was "in principle not against the currency board system — but we have to discuss the aspects of it". — *John Aglinby*

Sun, sand — and waiters on TV

HARRY Goodman, the former travel tycoon, is to launch a television channel in April with transmissions via satellite and cable. The travel channel, part owned by Flextech, will distribute on Sky TV's satellite a mix of live programming and taped items on holiday spots, beaches, hotels and "even the waiters". Mr Goodman, whose International Leisure Group went bankrupt in 1991, hopes to break new ground with programmes supported by a telephone booking service. — *Chris Barrie*

Vectra handbrake recall

VAUXHALL is recalling more than 200,000 Vectra cars because of a handbrake fault, the group said yesterday. The recall affects all models produced up to July 1997 and involves a free replacement of the cable in the system. About a dozen instances of related problems have been reported with the top-selling model, but nobody has been injured. Last night General Motors Europe said that it was recalling 730,000 Vectras. It was not immediately clear whether the figure included the recall by Vauxhall, which is part of GM in the UK. — *Mark Miller*

Guardian Reader offer

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England's back-row trio have been let off lightly by the selectors, given the performances of Richard Hill and Angelo, who had probably the best of the international games against France. The loose forwards again fail to dominate. Tony Diprose will come off the bench, possibly more than later with the aim of developing a more cohesive unit.

Perry's recall was predictable in view of Catt's inept option-taking at full-back. Clive Woodward, the England coach, said: "It was right to pick Catt for the France game", which it manifestly was not since he had been Bath's fly-half, or occasionally centre, since September.

England may have won their appeal against playing two scrum games this weekend. The side had been scheduled to play a Premiership game at London Irish on Friday evening and a Cheltenham and Gloucester quarter-final at Bedford on Sunday. The English Rugby Partnership, which yesterday ruled that the Premiership game takes priority,

Replacements: M Cat (Bath), P de (Northampton), D Garforth (Leicester) (Saracens), A Diprose (Saracens)

Punters' charter looking odds-on

Musselburgh Jackpot card

COURSE SPECIALISTS						
	Jockeys	1st	Run	%	Level St	Trainers
1	J Weaver	58	276	21	+39.15	R McManis
2	S Standen	40	333	12	+4.74	B Johnston
3	I DeBor	32	157	20.4	-36.82	J Berry
4	B Carter	31	225	13.8	-45.18	P Stanton
5	B Duffield	28	188	14.9	-23.91	A Bailey
6	R Bailey	26	106	24.8	+30.45	P Brown

6 Carter 57
P Finney 55

Lynda Jones 4-7-10	Joanne	D. Jennings	39
My B. Llewellyn 6-7-10		Roberts (7)	39
..... 6-7-10		A. McCarley	38
..... 4-7-10		F. Bradley	38
.....		P. M. Gallow	34

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10-1	William's Son (7) (2)	D. J. Murray Smith	5-8-4	
10-24	Jessie (109) (20)	G. H. Hays	7-0-2	
10-71	Sammy (109) (20)	G. H. Hays	5-8-1	
10-76	William (117) (20)	B. McKinnon	6-10-12	
10-77	William (117) (20)	J. W. Jones	4-8-10	
10-78	Franklin (116) (14)	C. Carroll	5-8-6	
10-79	Sammy Black (116) (14)	F. G. B. B.	7-0-1	
10-80	Walter's Son (109) (14)	M. Quinn	4-7-10	
10-81	Master Asaph	5-11	Quinn	7-1
10-82	William's Son	8-1	Winn	12-1
10-83	James	21-1	James	21-1

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5	B Duffield	28	188	14.9	-23.91	A Bailey
6	R Bailey	26	106	24.8	+30.45	P Brown

	1st	Points	%	Level St
82	807	10.2	-198.79	
95	251	21.8	+23.29	
44	304	14.5	-106.71	
36	204	18.8	+18.85	
33	282	11.3	-84.90	
20	338	9.83	-41.05	

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Victory in Trinidad

Matthew Engel sees the death of a superstition as England win without conviction at a previously unhappy hunting ground

The curse of Curtly cast off

SOD'S LAW, which has been enforced with draconian rigour in the last four Test matches England have played in Port of Spain, was finally repealed yesterday. When England have threatened to win a match at Queen's Park in the past 24 years, something has poured on them from a great height: either rain or Curtly Ambrose. They got both this time and they still won. It was like seeing the death of an old superstition.

Experienced travellers in the Caribbean generally get alarmed when they hear the phrase "No problem". It usually means your name has disappeared from the computer and your baggage is in Toronto. There really was no problem about scoring 235 for victory on this pitch — except those created by England's fear of Curtly, of this ground and of themselves.

They approached victory like a gauche and spotty teenager trying to seduce an ice-cool blonde. Despite all evidence to the contrary, there seemed an underlying certainty that the result would be door-slaming and face-slapping. But England really did have their trust with victory. It was unfamiliar and extremely sweet.

Their supporters dominated the ground. In Trinidad defeat is an orphan and the big local crowds of the week-end had melted away. Most of the English contingent had been expecting to spend the final day on the beach.

But the rain delay forced them back and they sat there wearing their shorts and their pessimism. "Thirty runs is an awful lot to make," said one neighbour. "God knows where they'll come from."

Singles were greeted like major victories, twos like the Relief of Mafeking and four leg-byes like VE Day. Otherwise there was hardly a sound.

When Graham Thorpe ran two, Ambrose stood there double-teapotting in a gesture of despair and near-surrender. Then Thorpe was out and Ambrose was eight feet tall again and threatening. He reacts to Jack Russell as Tom does to Jerry, except that Russell, with his shins and his helmet, now resembles the Biker Mouse from Mars.

As England edged closer, the first patriotic chants



Creeping closer... Dean Headley and Mark Butcher turn for another run off Courtney Walsh as England edge towards victory

REBECCA NADEN

were heard. Then Russell got out, and Andy Caddick, and there was silence again. In any other sport a packed house would have been going berserk for the closing minutes.

But this is cricket and it was time to stop for lunch. The rain-delayed start meant that the morning session was only 80 minutes, meaning Ambrose was able to bowl unchanged and come out

refreshed after the interval. It was a similar accident of timing that created the conditions for him to bowl England out for 46 four years ago.

But history has stopped repeating itself. Twelve more deliveries and it was over. A single from Butcher, three from Headley pushed past mid-on to cries of "Deano", another single, a no-ball and a bye — not the grandest manner of winning a Test match

but England were not looking for grandeur.

This was one of the most consistently heart-stopping Test matches ever played: a reminder, at a time when the game is stuttering in both England and West Indies, of why cricket is a great game and why Test cricket is by far the greatest form of it.

That cannot change the fact that the quality of the play — the batting especially — has

been indifferent and occasionally execrable. There are immensely gifted players on both sides, yet no one was able to take the game by the scruff until Mike Atherton and Alec Stewart came together on Sunday night.

England have also done the little things better. For once they out-fielded their opponents and, most especially, out-ran them between the wickets. It is a tribute to their

new professionalism, and to David Lloyd above all. But this has still seemed like a contest between two cauldron-eared and glass-jawed old heavyweights, who vaguely remember how to land a punch but are capable of swinging into thin air and then falling to the canvas together. England have crawled to their corner in better shape than West Indies. They will settle for that.

Looking in vain for that dark intimidating crowd

B C Pires reflects on the Trini Posse's absence as defeat proves hard to take

THERE was a huge, dark, intimidating cloud over England on the last morning of the third Test. But for once it was not Curtly Ambrose; just a huge, dark, intimidating cloud.

For the better part of the early morning it looked as if heavy rain would deny them but there was never a huge, dark, intimidating crowd trying to do the same thing.

Although the Oval gates were thrown open early, there were precious few locals. Trinidadians will cheerfully acknowledge the off-chance of witnessing a West Indian victory but they do not make time for losers. The crowd was almost entirely foreign, with the Barmy Army regulars chanting in the front line.

The ubiquitous Blue Food stood at the boundary fence,

blowing his conch shell and shouting that he was the Alpha and the Omega; he had been with them from the beginning and would be with them in the end. But he was the only vociferous Trinidadian.

The rest of the West Indian cheering consisted of a Balan woman in the Dos Santos stand who shouted that England could never beat West Indies at home. When it became undeniable that she would imminently be proved wrong, she declared that England was really a world team: two Ja-

malcans, a Pakistani and someone she described as a "New Zealand" man. It took, she said, the world to beat West Indies.

All around the ground upside-down Union Jacks fluttered but not a single streaker carrying a Trinidad and Tobago flag. "Where's that Trini Posse now, then?" called out a Barmy Infantryman at the presentation ceremony. It was a fair question. Even Anselm Douglas's hit Carnival song, Who Let the Dogs Out, was appropriated by the Barmy Army for the

benefit of Jack Russell.

Only once was a Trinidad and Tobago flag flaunted: by Jumbo, the peanut vendor who shook it menacingly at England supporters when Ambrose was on a hat-trick and the score 213 for seven. Where, you might ask, was Jumbo when the score was 212 for five? The answer: burying his head in the sand with the rest.

It says something about England cricket, though, that, with only 38 runs to get and six wickets in hand, there was still nail-biting worry. It says even more

about West Indies' cricket that nothing could be done to exploit that uneasiness.

West Indies cricket remains in crisis and all the more so because few West Indians acknowledge the emergency. Even after the close result in the second Test the prevailing attitude remained that West Indies could do whatever it took to beat England, or could count on England to do whatever was necessary to lose.

The result of the third Test proves that neither side of that equation can safely be relied upon in future.

Sri Lankans sack their own umpires

David Hopps in Colombo reports on a decision that has dire implications

THE Sri Lankan umpires who stood during England A's third-Test victory in Moratuwa have been dropped from the panel for the three one-day internationals after private complaints about their performance from their own players and officials.

Sri Lanka's umpires committee caved in yesterday to official demands that Muni-dasa Mendis and Saman Amarasinghe should be replaced in the wake of England's seven-wicket victory at De Soysa Park.

The Sri Lankan grievances chiefly surrounded the failure to adjudge Ben Hollis caught at the wicket in England's first innings. Hollis, on 15 with England up against it, went on to make 183 and transform the game. His tongue-in-cheek assertion afterwards that "the umpire's decision is final" was an admission that he had been fortunate to survive.

Nevertheless England have every cause to regard Sri Lanka's political machinations with cynicism, having suffered the majority of the dubious decisions in the series.

The weakness of Sri Lankan umpiring, in general, does not arise from bias or even a lack

of competence. Rather more it derives from their lowly status, which encourages officials to be safety conscious at best, fearful at worst, in pressure situations. Another browbeating from management and players can only exacerbate an unhealthy situation.

Sri Lanka's foremost cricket writer, Callistus Davy of the Island newspaper, was aghast last night that the two umpires had been made scapegoats for the defeat, suggesting the decision could "send Sri Lankan cricket back into the dark ages".

Davy said: "Umpires should never be dropped from a properly selected panel just because some official makes a complaint. This decision is going to put players above umpires, and that can only have damaging results. It is very irregular of the administrators; totally unjustified."

No Sri Lanka official suggested that K T Francis should step down when the Zimbabweans made an official complaint to the International Cricket Council about his umpiring last month, in particular his failure to give out the Sri Lanka captain Arjuna Ranatunga.

Sri Lanka fielded their fourth captain in as many games, the Test all-rounder Ruwan Karp, for the first one-day match in Moratuwa today, and have taken the number of players selected to date to 23. Two umpires with international experience, D N Pathirana and T M Samarasinghe, will officiate. It should be fun.

Double trouble hits Pakistan

Paul Weaver in Johannesburg

WHILE Pakistan's tour of South Africa continued amid farce yesterday the chairman of the country's cricket board, Khalid Mahmood, said back home that the government may call in intelligence agencies to investigate match-fixing allegations.

Mahmood repeated earlier assertions that there was no proof to back media allegations that the former captain Wasim Akram had been involved in match-fixing or had rigged betting on games. Akram, dropped from the South Africa tour after saying he was unfit and under pressure, may join the squad by the third Test, Mahmood said.

Mahmood also dismissed suggestions here that Mohammad Akram and Saqlain Mushtaq were not telling the truth when they claimed they had been mugged outside their hotel in Johannesburg.

In the face of growing police, media and public scepticism, the Pakistan tour manager Asad Aziz issued a

statement yesterday backing the players and denying allegations that the assault had taken place at a night-club, Club 69.

The fourth day's play at the Wanderers ground was washed out but even if there had been cricket, it would have been overshadowed by the bizarre happenings of the field.

There were reports last night that the Pakistan players "did not feel comfortable" that it was "not safe to remain" and that it was their "unanimous" wish to return home. Despite this the tour is likely to limp on.

The Pakistan manager's statement read in part: "I have personally satisfied myself that the report I received from the players of having been mugged is true and accurate. I have assured the police that they will and do have my full co-operation and assistance in their investigation."

A police spokesman, Captain Andy Piek, said: "We are still waiting for the players to provide us with sworn statements but, with two murders in Sandton tonight, we have other things to concern us."

Full action replay

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Athletics

Triple-jumpers lead British title hopes in Europe

Duncan Mackay

BITAIN have been living by the adage that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive after failing to win a gold medal in their last three major championships. But they will face a Spanish inquisition if they return from the European Indoor Championships in Valencia next week without any gold to declare.

The team, announced yesterday, includes four athletes who are top of the world rankings. The best opportunities of gold medals lie with the triple-jumpers Jonathan Edwards and Ashta Hansen, who both set UK records when winning their events at the Bupa Indoor Grand Prix in Birmingham on Sunday.

Julian Golding, in the 200 metres, and Solomon Wariso, in the 400m, also performed well at Birmingham to con-

solidate their positions as the favourites in Spain. But there is no place for the defending 400m champion Duane Ladefog, who has not raced in Britain this season because of a hamstring injury.

Edwards's preparations for Valencia have been hit by flu but he jumped 17.64m to win the Bupa event, a UK record by 33 centimetres and the fourth best in history.

GRAND BRITAIN: Men: 50 metres, D Brathwaite (Birmingham); 100 metres, D Brathwaite (Birmingham); 200 metres, J Golding (Birmingham); 400 metres, S Wariso (Birmingham); 800 metres, P Syme (SEC Arlon); 1,000 metres, J Maycock (Canterbury); 1,500 metres, I Gillespie (Birmingham); 2,000 metres, A Jarrett (Birmingham); 2,500 metres, D Challenger (Birmingham); 3,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 3,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 4,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 4,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 5,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 5,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 6,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 6,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 7,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 7,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 8,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 8,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 9,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 9,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 10,000 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 10,500 metres, S Challenger (Birmingham); 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